

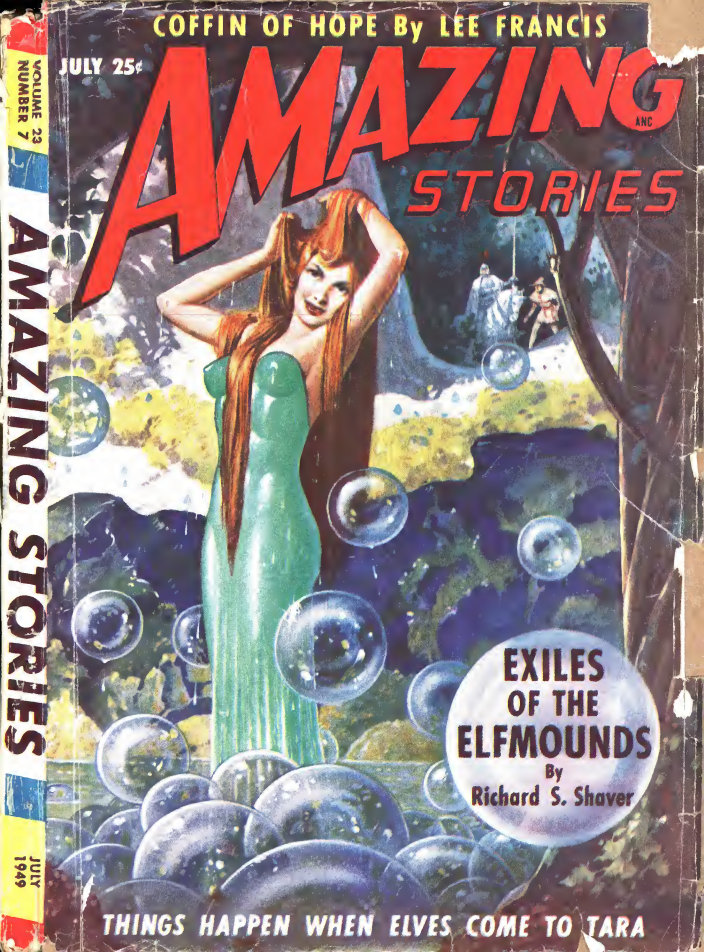
COFFIN OF HOPE By LEE FRANCIS

JULY 25¢

VOLUME 23
NUMBER 7

AMAZING STORIES

AMAZING STORIES

A woman with long red hair, wearing a green strapless dress, stands in a forest. She is holding her hair with both hands. The forest floor is covered in many large, translucent bubbles. In the background, there is a large tree and a small figure of a person in a white robe.

**EXILES
OF THE
ELFMOUNDS**
By
Richard S. Shaver

THINGS HAPPEN WHEN ELVES COME TO TARA

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THRILLS!

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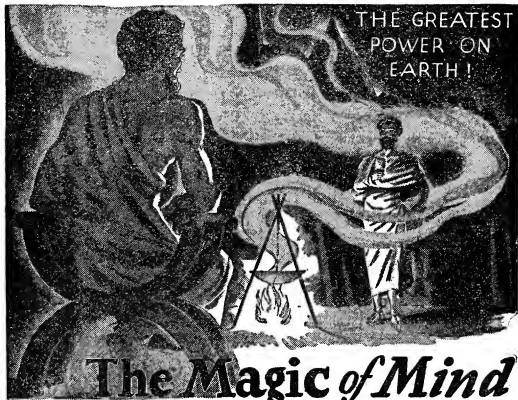
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Cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones, illustrating a scene from "Exiles Of The Elfmounds"

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The

OBSERVATORY

..... *by the Editor*

THE OTHER day a group of scientists and intellectuals met in New York to discuss the future. They did exactly what science fiction enthusiasts do at their annual conventions. And their talk sounded so very much like science fiction. But they were branded as "communists" by rival organizations and invited scientists and intellectuals from other countries were denied admitted to the convention, because some of them were from Russia, and some were "slightly pink". Every reader of science fiction knows science isn't political. And if the "pink" ones wanted to "sound off", why not let them? We're smart enough to know whether a thing is political or scientific? Why not let us science fiction readers "tell 'em off" if they don't measure up to science fiction's ideas of how science and mechanics (as related to our standard of living in the future) are to be developed and used? What's the matter with scientists talking over their future plans for Mankind? We all want better washing machines, airplanes, musical instruments, entertainment, and so on. Let's not let anybody color our good old science fiction world pink or any other color. Readers of science fiction are darn good Americans, and generous and forward-looking ones, even when foreigners are concerned. Science fiction readers are in the habit of slapping down "isms" and creating the "good things of life" in imagination long before the technicians get around to making realities out of them. That's exactly what our next WORLD CONVENTION is going to do—and we AREN'T going to be called red, or even pink. We're red, white and blue, every inch of the way!

THIS ISSUE we are presenting a story by Richard S. Shaver, which *isn't* a part of the Shaver Mystery. Mr. Shaver has requested, and we have given him, sole ownership of his "mystery". Actually, we never owned it—since we bought only magazine rights on his *stories*, so it wasn't actually necessary. But if he can sell his mystery to another magazine, we have no objection, certainly, and if he does, we wish him luck. Whatever happens we will continue to present the best of his stories in our pages, as he submits them to us. Even your editor has a right to believe his stories contain much true material, and privately,

he does believe it. But it's up to you readers to do the same, if you wish. So, you "mystery" fans, we ask you, what has been changed? Shaver still tells us (privately) that his stories are true. Maybe they are? Our refusing to SAY the same thing doesn't change the story, does it? But we DO say his stories are very fine science fiction, and as such, they belong in our magazine, and our readers deserve them.

LEE FRANCIS presents a good one this time called "Coffin of Hope". It's about three people who sleep in suspended animation through the atom war, and of what they find when they wake up. Ought to interest you.

A NEW writer, David C. McGowan, writes a space opera for us which isn't bad. It's titled "Decoy In Space". Yes, the "decoy" is a woman, and a pretty one. And the nasty old pirates are hoist by their own petard. This ought to satisfy your lust for action.

ROG PHILLIPS can always be depended on for an original idea, but this time his idea is not original—he stole it from your editor, who stole it from David Vern, who stole it from we don't know who. It's based on a little skit we used to go through for the benefit of curious visitors, about how there are really only three cities in the U. S. and when you get on a train, little men move the city by side roads to where you think you are going, and since the railroad tracks are only a few inches long, you believe you are speeding at seventy miles per hour, judging from the clicking of the wheels, and actually you are just creeping along. If you look out the windows, you can see trucks going past in the dark, very mysteriously. They are merely trucking the city to the next place and setting it up so that when you arrive, you believe you are in another place. The railroads charge you so much a mile, and really it is only a big racket.

THREE other authors complete our lineup this month—Guy Archette, Charles Recour, and G.L. Cleggett. All of them have turned in good jobs, so settle back and enjoy yourself for another month. RAP

THREE GREAT NAMES



By BERTRAM LYONS



GERTRUDE STEIN, Epstein, and Einstein—three names which have caused more discussion individually and collectively than almost any others in the world. Gertrude Stein's literary activities—be they pretensions or not—caused an upheaval in Parisian intellectual circles. Epstein's famous statuary set the world of art by the heels.

But the most famous—and deservedly so—is Albert Einstein. If the name of any single man of the twentieth century had to be chosen as an example of one who had most revolutionized the world—indirectly—that of Einstein would certainly be first.

He is without doubt—or has been—the world's greatest theoretical physicist. From nineteen five to the dawn of the atomic age, he has had something to do with steering the course of modern science. What makes this so remarkable is that his laboratory is in his head. It is doubtful if Einstein would have ever made a great experimental physicist, yet his thoughts are the ones which guide physicists today. The purpose of this article is to try and consider what possibly motivated Einstein to think as he did. Most persons, most students of physics would have been content to make some important discovery and let it go at that. Not Einstein! He went back to the most fundamental of all considerations—the nature of time and space. And no pioneers worthy of the name had preceded him either. Even the great Sir Isaac Newton backwatered at interpreting the

basic nature of the universe. For him time and space were absolutes, even though that attitude did not quite harmonize with what he knew of the physical world.

Einstein however, through some ingenious thinking quirk, examined the world of space and time from a truly objective view. Said he, in effect; "Apparently, no matter how hard science tries, it cannot find absolute universal hitching posts where time and position begin. That being so, let us start with the startling postulate that there are none!"

Such almost heretical thinking would be enough to astound anyone, but when the man offers it to the cold and concrete tests of experimentation with solid facts, figures and observations—then something can be learned of the analytical nature of him. "I believe time and space are intertwined," said Einstein, "and I think because of that, space is relative, as is time. I agree with the early geometer Minkowski—space and time sink into shadows of themselves and merge."

Science has since proven Einstein's views to be correct, as all the world knows. Similarly Einstein has gone from the vastness of the universe into the minuteness of the atom and boldly charted a reasonable course there.

When the question is ever asked, "Who was the greatest physicist of the twentieth century?" the answer will come roaring back, "Einstein!"

THE END

THE CYNIC PHILOSOPHER



By A. B. BALLARD



WE ALL ARE quite familiar with the names of the "greats in philosophy. Names such as Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. But how many of us have ever heard of Antisthenes?

We know that Aristotle did, for he termed Antisthenes as being both simple-minded and uneducated. Plato too had a word to say for him. But what about the other of the three—Socrates?

Possibly Socrates had more of an influence on Antisthenes than any other man. For while Antisthenes was still a student, he fell under the spell of Socrates and became one of his most avid pupils. It has been said that Antisthenes would walk many miles just to hear Socrates speak. And as a result of his admiration of Socrates it followed that he founded his

own school of philosophy, which has become known as the "Cynic School." Just why it was thus called is a matter for some discussion. It has been argued that Antisthenes wanted to spread words of wisdom to the poorer classes, which in truth he did, and it is conceivable that he was tagged as a cynic as a result. Whatever the reason, one thing remains a fact. He was a prolific writer in his day, filling over ten volumes with his dissertations. The unfortunate thing is that very few bits of his work remain existant to this day. We do however, have the word of Plato and Aristotle that Antisthenes was worthy of attention—even by two of the world's greats!

THE END

Long ago in Ireland, at Da Derga's hostel, a legendary battle was fought. Some say that witches fought against men and that mankind lost a great prize!



At the edge of the strangely silent water
a woman with a comb of silver sat beside
a silver basin ornamented with golden birds.



EXILES

By Richard S. Shaver

of the ELFMOUNDS

THE SEA had ceased to roll. Now at last the waves lay still. All that water lay as still and smooth as though no ripple ever had raced with shining laughter toward the sun.

The lifting birds ceased. The sky grew empty as a friendless face. There was no cloud, no bird, no breath of air, no sound.

At the edge of the strangely silent water sat a woman with a comb of silver by a silver basin. On the rim of the basin were four golden birds and little bright gems of carbuncle. Her mantle was curly-woven of purple. The mantle had silvery fringes, and was held by a fair golden brooch. Her kirtle was of green silk with red

embroidery of gold. Marvelous clasp of gold at her breast and shoulders, and spaulds glittered wherever the sun shone upon her. Two yellow tresses were hued like gold soon after burnishing.

White as the snow of one night were her hands. Dark as the stag beetle were her brows. He teeth were a showering of pearls. The bright radiance of the moon was in her noble face. The light of wooing was in each of her regal eyes as she saw the rider approaching. Of her was said, "Shape-ly are all till compared with Etain".

Toward the sea and the woman, through that strange silence, Eochaid Feidlech came riding. A longing for her seized the king. "Whence art

thou?" queried Eochaid.

"Etain am I, daughter of Etar, king of the elfmounds. The men of the Elf-mounds have been a-wooing me, both Kings and nobles, but naught was gotten from me. I have heard high tales of thy splendor. Perchance you too come a-wooing?"

"That could be!" Eochaid dismounted. "But how is it that one from the elfmounds allows herself to be seen by men on the green surface lands? Secret and to themselves ever the elfmen keep."

"We keep not secret from fear, but from old custom. I find no need for fleeing from one man, and that man you!"

"No need have you!" answered Eochaid.

"Know, Eochaid," said Etain "that ever since I was able to speak I have given thee a child's high love for the grand tales about thee and thy splendor. Though I had never seen thee I knew thee at once. It is thou, then, that I have reached!"

"Thou shalt have welcome of me," quoth Eochaid. "Sure and I never saw woman I wanted more!"

"My proper bride price to me!" she said, "and afterward my desire."

"Thou shalt have both," said Eochaid with a will, for certain he was that her like was not in existence under the sun, or under the moon either.

NOW AS they bound their strange and sudden bargain, came crashing through the strange silence that seemed to have been induced by some spell worked by the art of this woman from the Underworld of the Elf-mounds—came crashing the sounds of many men.

Eochaid looked up from the perfect lips of Etain with thunder in his eyes, and murder stealing into the

great muscles above his strong wrists—for no man likes to be interrupted when interviewing a witch-woman.

Out from the wood upon the quiet golden sands came a dozen of his men, led by Curnach, son of Hua Faich, and at present steward of the King's household and esteeming himself far more than his position gave warrant.

The twelve held their naked swords in their hands, and shoved forward between them three stalwart youths. Walking with the three, though no man's hand was on him, came Conaire, the mighty son of Eochaid, and the apple of his eye.

"What business is this that cannot wait for high court in Tara?" Eochaid roared.

For he saw the three were the foster-brothers of Conaire, the sons of Donn Desa, and knew exactly what business they had been caught in.

His own son had been raised with the three sons of Donn Desa, and there was little of that pirate's ways that Eochaid did not know. He only hoped it was not too serious.

To keep the situation in hand, Eochaid took the floor by turning to Etain with an explanation—and an introduction.

"This curly-haired lad of the big arms and too-sincere eyes is my son Conaire. These three culprits now seemingly under restraint, are his three foster brothers with whom he was raised, much to my discomfiture through the years. They are the sons of the sea-pirate Donn Desa and have inherited his taste for rapine and plunder, brawling and wenching, and certain other pursuits not fit to mention."

Etain nodded, smiling on the four youths so that their heads swam and their knees weakened with desire and another emotion. Eochaid called

it witch-lure, and Etain called it the "smell of the elfmounds".

Conaire awakened from the spell of her eyes and her lips and the fresh skin that clothed her in beauty, and said:

"If I could have been there, Father, it would not have happened. The young blood of the Desa's is always hot and lusty, and these my foster brothers are no different."

"And what was it that happened, Conaire?"

"Twas the son of the king of Alba, visiting in Tara, learning the way of kingship from yourself. Drunk, these three set upon him. He drew sword, and they took his sword from him and killed him. Much can come of it! We have brought them to you, for war can be averted now only by your wisdom."

"You say a truth there, Conaire. By your lives I promised Alba the safety of the young prince. Your life, if aught happened to him here! If I keep not my promise, it means the lives of thousands of warriors, the fate of Erin. It had to be the son of Eterscel of Alba; it couldn't be the son of the tavern keeper, no! Always they find the path to the greatest brew, the making of the mightiest trouble. A pox upon the sons of Donn Desa, I say! I have shielded them enough. This is the last time I shield them from the death they deserve."

"Father, we have been brothers, they are as your sons!"

"I'll not kill them. I don't have to. Curnach knows what I must do. Say it, Curnach."

"These three and your own son must be put aboard ship for Alba this day, or the honor of Eochaid dies!"

"There you have it, Conaire. My oath to Echur of Alba: to forfeit your life to him if his son was not guard-

ed as mine own while he visited here. So get yourselves aboard ship, and may Alba be more merciful to you than Erin will be if you go not to fulfill my pledge."

"The king of Alba will kill us out of hand. Is there no other way?"

Eochaid turned away, as though his sons were already dead. "Take them away, Curnach." His voice was like the voice of the dead alive.

THOSE FOUR young champions of Erin who were best loved of Eochaid were taken from him thus by an oath, and by his love for Erin.

"Eochaid," Etain murmured, "what you have done seems what must be done, yet evil will come of it, and in time your own death."

"I have heard that the people of the elfmounds have the gift of prophecy," Eochaid said sadly, "but even though I saw the future bright as day before me, how could I do otherwise?"

"Knowing is that way, Eochaid. There is never much one can do about the future."

"Read it to me, Etain. I would know what it is you see."

Etain closed her sea-bright eyes, and threw her far-sight across the sea into Alba, and into Britain, and read there the men and the minds and the things that might come to pass. Her mouth opened and she said as one asleep: "There is in Britain a brother of seven sons. His name is Ingcel, and he is one-eyed. A monster of strength, his blood pants for the reaving, his ears roar with the waves, and the madness of the sea is in him. He it is whom the sons of Donn Desa will find and follow, and never the vengeance of Alba will reach them. And one day they come a-reaving into Erin, and Conaire with them, and the sons of Donn Desa

and an array of champions such as never took to the longboats before. And that is the force that shall be your death and my sorrow. So I read it from the earth-mind, who knows men as a hen her chicks, and what they will do and when on her broad bosom."

Eochaid shook his head. "A chancy affair this thread my life hangs upon! Meantime I'll have joy of you, and forget the future, the past and all things but the sound of your voice in song, the movement of your leg that brings you to me, the soft feel of your flesh in my hands—ah, Etain, why did you wait so long, if it was Eochaid you wanted of all the men you might have had?"

"To leave the harsh portals of the elfmounds was the barrier between us. Even my beauty is not a key to turn that lock easily. You know how many bars there are to the doors of the underworld."

"Aye," answered Eochaid. "So it has ever been. No one comes forth but dying exiles; dead-alive they be usually—or mighty and young champions such as no guard dared to raise sword to. Or sorcerers such as exist nowhere but in the elfmounds, and scarce they must be even there."

Eochaid took Etain home to the halls of Tara, and their life was happy for a time, save for thoughts of his son, Conaire, and the fate he had been forced to send him into. But Etain had in her mind the face and form of Conaire, for he was young and vigorous as Eochaid had been when he had done the deeds for which she loved him. And in Conaire's mind a hot vision of Etain lived on.

THE BARQUE that bore Conaire and Fer Le and Fer Gar and Fer Rokein, the three sons of Donn Desa,

toward Alba, bore Curnach and fifty men as surety they would reach Alba. But as they rounded the bouldered shoulder of Isle Machler, the faces of fifty men and the face of Curnach turned grey as dirty snow. For bearing down from the windward came thrice fifty ships, flying the flag of Ingcel, the reaver, son of Conmac of Britain.

"Now do we meet our doom," said Curnach, and put on his black armor, took up his shield, loosened his sword in the sheath. But his face said loudly he knew there was little use in the doing.

The little barque came about, sails flapping as she strove to catch the full breeze—but it was too late. The reaver's oars flashed, her ragged sail closed, the spars scraped together. Over the rail poured the fierce-eyed British, and scarce a minute fled before the fifty and Curnach were dead in their mingled blood.

Conaire and Fer Le, Fer Gar and Fer Rokein lay chained to the oak mast. Over them stooped the gigantic one-eyed Ingcel, saying: "Naught but a combat on equal terms shall befall thee, if ye tell me the truth of why the son of the King of Erin lies chained here on this barque?"

Conaire eyed the tall monstrosity, belted with worn leather, armored in scarred and rusty iron, and the great blade he bore in his hand red and dripping with the blood of men who had not harmed him.

"Ye must have come a seeking me, to know who I am at first glance."

"That I did and for a reason, as you shall know. A reason that means a ruler's seat to me, and to you the same, if you can see as my eyes do."

"I have ears, oh Ingcel. Say on."

"I have been driven from my home these many years, by my six brothers and my father, the king of Conmac.

Thirteen hundred men, wild, bold reavers of the greatest courage, have I gathered under the banner of Ingcel. Great is my fame, as ye must have heard."

"Great is your fame for murder and rapine and were-wolfing of nights; for raiding of defenseless steads and leaving naught but smoking ruins, Ingcel. But what is all that to me, who am already dead by forfeit to the King Of Alba?"

"Virtue ill becomes you who consort with the sons of Donn Desa, whose fame when he was young was far greater and more feared than my own. But many affect virtue who have been ill-raised, only to turn into wolves when their way of life shows them the profit. My plan is this: in Erin one third of the warriors are reavers, and even now, but last harvest-time, were driven forth from Erin by Eochaid and his nobles. Down upon Britain came they, and lay waste all the northland even now before them. With you to lead them under me, we should have a force to lay Alba under our feet in its own blood."

LONG CONAIRE looked up at the fierce one-eyed face of this master of the art of bloodshed. And in his mind flickered ever the face of Eochaid, grey as death, and beside him the glorious womanly face of Etain, her soft form, the music of her voice. For no woman had ever turned his mind toward desire as had his one meeting with Etain of the elfmounds. And a plan grew in the mind of young Conaire like some sudden mushroom of sinister, poison nature, blooming purple and virulent—and the face that had been ever the mirror of honor flushed over with a sudden inverting evil flood, and Conaire said: "Something you plan brings to

my mind the way toward certain desires I have; we must speak of this raiding with care, Ingcel, for much could come of it. It is true that the reavers of Erin would follow Conaire, son of Eochaid, did he turn toward the path of rapine—and many another of the young bloods of Erin would turn toward me, too, did that come to pass. Harsh has Eochaid been with their birthrights of theft and robbery and rapine and the sea-raids. The wild blood beats in them, and will flame if one blows upon it, that I know."

The change in Conaire was noted by Ingcel with relish. His dark mind saw here one whom he could bend to his will, and he exulted inwardly.

"Aye," said Ingcel. "After Alba will come raids upon Erin and upon Britain, and rich will we grow with the profit of the looting. Even the great thrones of Conmac and Eochaid will shudder and fall, in time, before us."

"Such plans were better left unsaid before the common ear, Ingcel. It were enough for them to repeat that we go toward some island—then the rumors heard by our enemies will be confusing."

"All men who meet the reavers come with us or die, Conaire. Rumors do not begin from our talk, for none live to spread them!"

Conaire, now the die was cast, said: "That is a good method, Ingcel. The future for me looks brighter than it did an hour ago, and I am grateful."

But Conaire's heart was heavy, and ever in his mind the grey, aging face of Eochaid came unaccountably and reproachfully. And ever after came the blood in his eyes—and how else would beat like the sea in his ears, and the sea waves grew rosy from the blood in his eyes—and how else than by Eochaid's death could he get

hands on Etain?

If he had known that even then, in the arms of Eochaid his father, Etain's thought turned mutinously from her lifelong desire for the famous Eochaid, and dwelt upon the young glory of the strength and beauty of Conaire as she had seen him in the sun on the beach, he would have had plans colored even brighter with the picture of his reward in her arms. For he did not know that his desire for Etain could ever be gratified with her consent, for her face was a face of honor and of wisdom. And even young Conaire knew that wisdom has a way of refusing evil, no matter how bright a thing may be brought by the evil. But what wisdom and virtue might have to do with the possessing of Etain, Conaire could not discover. And the strange new growth in his mind told him that have her he would, willing or unwilling.

THE SHIPS of Ingcel landed on the shoulders of Valentia, between Alba and Britain, and they traveled south afoot, leaving the ships, seeking the bands of reavers from Erin. They found them by the smoke of the fires, for the whole land was ablaze, and dead bodies strewed the smoking homestead. The stink of their passing was the stink of death.

One of the chiefs under Ingcel was named Mane' Unslow. Ingcel asked him about the reavers, for he had the gift of far-sight, even as hand Etain. He saw a troop of madmen, the Red Hounds of Cualla, and the champions, Cethach and Clothack and Conall. . . . but the smoke and the fear and the wounded and fleeing and weeping land obscured his far-sight, and the earth-mother would not tell him anything more of the reavers. So the

band marched southward into the burning land, seeking out the reavers from Erin.

They came up with them at last, and a gory and awful sight they were. Their swords were naked and running with blood, and they were clad in bear skins and wolf hides and little else but fierceness.

Ingcel strode forward with his chiefs, Eiccel and Tulchine, great grandsons of Conmac. Huge and ungente were these three, towering two heads above the men that stepped forward from the men of Erin, Cethach and Clothach and Conall.

Ingcel had need of gentle speech and careful dealing, for the reavers were in the heat of slaughter and they outnumbered his own band by twice. Said Ingcel: "Do not break the truth of men upon us, for ye are greater in number."

"Naught but combat on equal terms shall befall you," answered Conall of Cualla.

"I come to offer somewhat better for you than that. Ye have been cast out of Erin, and I likewise out of my own land of Britain—and with me is Conaire of Erin, your own Prince, cast out by his father to the mercies of the king of Alba for an oath of safety for his son. Together, we three leaders can muster strength to crush those who have cast us out, and the thrones of three lands can be taken by us, one after another. Alba we will take to free Conaire and his three foster brothers from the fear of their vengeance upon them for the death of the young Prince, son of Eterscel. Britain we will take to free men of the exile by my father and my brothers. Erin we will take for the slaying of Eochaid and for the profit that lies in it. What think you? If we succeed in these three destructions, there is no power we

need fear. In all the Isles would remain none to stand before us!"

Conall of Cuala beat his sword upon his shield, so that it clanged in exultation at the pictures of plunder and power spread by the words of Ingcel.

"Now are you safe from me, Ingcel of Britain. Lots we shall cast to decide which of the three shall befall us first—and then get ourselves to the work."

The cast of the dice fell to Ingcel; that is, the lot indicated Britain as the first to bring their destruction upon. The same night they boarded ships and sailed along the coast toward Ingcel's home—the steading of Conmac of Britain their destination.

THE SHIPS of Ingcel and the ships of Conall of Cuala, who had given up leaderships to the son of Eochaid, landed in the night on the rocky slopes of Sumner's head. A good four thousand men, they marched inland through the night, silently. Eerie was that march, and dark and brooding the thought of young Conaire, leading them. For the blood of these reavers was hot for the slaughter, but his own was chill as icewater in his veins, and his heart heavy with the lot that had fallen to him from blind chance.

The moon drifted behind the clouds, peering out upon them, only to hide her head again at the sight of the strong limbs striding toward bloodshed—toward treachery of Ingcel upon his own blood.

The wind wailed softly, and the trees moaned and cast their shadows across the paths threateningly. Dark furtive things that were not men or animals scuttled before them, wailing like far-off banshees.

In the dull dawn-light the steading of Conmac lay before them, dark and sleeping and defenseless. Silent as

prowling wolves they crept ever nearer, and nothing there was to stay the destruction.

As the sun rose to light the work, and the pearly shafts shot athwart the dark hills, Ingcel gave the call of a wolf, and half their number rushed down upon the sprawling homes of the men of Conmac. Swift was the death-dealing. Scarce had the women screamed awake before the power of Conmac lay in its blood.

So it was that the seven brothers of Ingcel, the exile, died, and Conmac, ruler of Britain died in his bed, and there was left no man with claim to the throne but Ingcel, son of Conmac.

The flames shot up from all the wide holding. The home of Conmac was no more.

NOW INGCEL sat there seven days, with his reavers about him, drinking and getting drunk, wenching and bawling—and every wild-blood of the land flocked to his banner. All the sober men of Britain sighed vast relief when Ingcel set sail upon the wild sea again.

That gloomy fleet-load of blood-mad warriors made for Alba, and silently through the night loosed their wolf natures upon the Kingdom of Alba, and left there nothing but shattered corpses and burned homes, flame and ruin and death and weeping maidens hiding in the woodland.

The thing within Conaire that was himself—the self that had been raised by Eochaid to love justice and the land of Erin and the men and the homes of Erin, to love Tara's halls and the honor and virtue of the women of Erin—that thing for which there are few names that fit, called by Christians the soul, by pagans the spirit, by thinkers the mind, by lovers the heart, but which is all of

these and much more, the spark that causes all the meaning and the course of life: that thing was like a hiding child within him, cowering from the face of the truth. For the mad blood-thirst of the reavers was a thing he had known from childhood, but had known it only when under the check reins of wise men such as Eochaid. Here the blood-gifts of rapine and murder and theft were not held in check, but given rein and allowed to lead the power, were the power and the horror and the course of life—and nothing was left of beauty when it had run its course. Nothing was left but smoking ruins of all that had stood across their path in these two destructions. And they had met no man that had not died or else joined in with them to wreak destruction.

To know thus the horror of the reaving and to lead it, to be a part of it—was to Conaire a bath in something worse far than blood. It was curdling the marrow of him to carry on his part of this work. Yet ever before him shimmered the white limbs of Etain, moving rhythmically and caressingly, and her red lips smiled and her hands beckoned, and he knew that never could he have this woman who burned before him clad only in witch-fire and lure and love, never could he have power or honor in Erin unless this destruction were wreaked upon Tara. For now his own honor stood bound to Ingcel, who had let them wreck their destruction upon his own home and people. And the face and form of Eochaid now rose before him less often, but rose as a threatening ghost from Hades, shaking its head sadly as if already dead and haunting him.

The thinking of these conflicting things made deep lines about Conaire's mouth, so that years seemed to have settled upon him in these few

short days. His foster-brothers noted the dread change that seemed at work within him, but said nothing, for themselves were mad with the bloodlust and the release of it within their bodies which had always been held in the reins of Donn Desa's fiery will but now was free.

So the dread fleet crossed the sea waves and stood in to the coast off Bregia over against Howth.

"Strike the sails" shouted Ingcel, buckling on his scarred armor. "After we land, you sailors take the ships out to sea, that they may not be sighted from the land. At each darkness come again for us that are left of this destruction, for I have a boding that all will not go well. Twice only could luck hold with us; the third time is too much to expect."

Said Mane' Unslow: "Let me go ashore with nine men that I may cast my far-sight ahead to see what is in store. Let the band follow after, and if aught is amiss, I will know it in time."

So it was ordered, and nine men went ahead and the four thousand came after into Erin.

"What seest thou?" asked Finn McGoole of Mane' Unslow.

"I see a cavalcade, a good course that shakes a great covering of the land. They fare to many heights, nearer to us they come."

"What are the waters and heights they traverse?"

"Over the heights of Indeoín, the mountain quivers yet with their passing, many fine steeds, slender and keen vehement and whetted. Mother earth has loved their passing and remembers for my sight. My ears can hear her murmur of her sons that pass over her breast.

"Down the slopes of Mafat, to the waters Finne they pass, grey spears over chariots, ivory-hilted swords on

thighs, silvery shields above their elbows. Half red and half white are they, Eochaid's men and Donn Desa's in the red, and Dairne's and Mache Mede's in the white. Garments of every color there, too. The strength of Erin rides."

"The far-sight reveals a multitude, and my boding is dark within me—" The voice of Finne McGoole was heavy with the future and his own blood spilled upon it.

Back went the nine to the host under Ingcel to tell of the seeing.

The three sons of Donn Desa moaned, for to them was the meaning clear. "May God not bring Eochaid and Donn Desa under the destruction tonight."

"Meseems," says Ingcel, "it should be no sadder for me than the destruction I gave you the reaving of at my home. This will be my feast and my return for slaying of my father and my brothers."

CONAIRE listened and moaned, and the three sons of Donn Desa moaned, for their father and foster-father, their comrades, were nearing the scene of destruction. And each said. "Alas, like our brothers were they. Dear were the champions. We should not have neared them tonight. Had they but fared elsewhere."

"Clouds of weakness upon you," said Ingcel. "Saw you such tears in my eyes when rapine struck death into Conmac's steading and death claimed my brothers? Reavers ye are, and no other way of life may ye have. May your blood turn to water, ye cannot turn away your hand from this work. Slay, and we live. Fail, and soon or late they will hunt us down."

Ingcel turned again to Man' Unslow. "What place is near to us, that this multitude may be headed for?"

"Da Derga's hostel. Good men, indeed, are likely to seek their fellows at that hostel tonight. Hua Derga is chief hospitaler of Erin."

The reavers counseled together to send one of their number to see how things were there at Da Derga's hostel.

"Who should go but I?" swore Ingcel. "For 'tis I that am entitled to the dues, you having collected in my country."

As Ingcel stole through the night, his huge form made black unwieldly shadows across the wild soil, a shadow that reached before him and settled about the mighty hostel like the spirit of death itself. And as he went through the night, the reavers formed a counsel circle in the forest, the chiefs of the reavers being in the center. Fer Gar and Fer Rogain, Conaire and Lomna the buffoon, Fer Rogel and Fer Lon, Aife la Sruth, whose buttocks were as big as cheeses, and Mache Mod, whose hair was so stiff that a basket of apples spilled over him would all have remained stuck on the hairs. The fists of Mache Mod were the size of reaping baskets, and he clutched a sword black and huge as an outside shaft.

Ingcel returned and sat his huge one-eyed gloomy self down among the center circle of the counsel.

Fer Rogain turned to question Ingcel, who only stared gloomily before him.

"How is this place, and what goes there?"

"Hostful is the tumult, and kingly is the noise, howe'er it be. Eochaid is coming this night, I swear it. But whether there be a king there tonight or not, I take the house, for I have a right to it. My turn of rapine cometh."

"But we should not wreak the destruction till we know who may be

therein!"

"I will accept it for my dues from all of you, the return for the destruction of my own country."

"You may well accept it, O Ingcel. Erin's overking rests there tonight, and rich will be the looting."

CONAIRE thought upon the curious mental attitude of Ingcel, that he should have considered as he led them to the holding of Conmac that he was earning their own obligation to so lead him to a looting of their own homes and country. Curious mind, to consider honor and its meaning even as he led that bloody band to the death of his own brothers, and that for the purpose of assuring his own succession. To consider that he had earned from them the due of a similar favor upon their own king and people...

"One there I saw, a man of noble countenance, large, with a clear eye, even teeth, a face narrow below and broad above. Flaxen hair and a fillet above it. He bore a gold-hilted sword and a shield with five golden circles upon it. He carried too a five-barbed javelin. A fair face, ruddy, but beardless. Who might that man be?"

"'Tis Cormac Condlongas," answered Conaire.

"There were nine men about him, and one would think them the children of the same parents. Goodly men, all alike, and the same age. Rods of gold in their mantles, bent shields of bronze they bear. Ribbed javelins and an ivory hilted sword for each."

"The men of Cormac; he picked them for their likeness. Woe to this destruction; it should not be attempted if only for the sake of this one man."

"Thy voice, O Lomna, hath taken to breaking upon you." Ingcel's

voice was scornful. "Thou art a worthless warrior, and I know thee. I feel the foreboding too, but clouds of weakness do not overwhelm me."

Reproach not our honor, Ingcel," said Fer Rogain and Ger, "The destruction shall be wrought; you have had our oath upon it since these three reavings were planned. Else all of us are slain, or earth break under us, it shall be wrought."

Ingcel mused: "I saw another room there with three brown men in it, three round heads of hair on them, three short black cowls reaching to their elbows. Three black huge swords and three broad green javelins above them. Liken thou them, Fer Rogain?"

Lomma Druth sat and shuddered, saying: "Woe is me before everyone; 'tis my head shall be tossed about there tonight among the chariot shafts."

"Men from Pictland, exiles taking service under Eochaid. Dublonges, son of Trebaut, Trebaut, son of Hua Lonsce, Cornach, son of Huey Faica. Famous warriors all."

Ingcel went on: "There I beheld another room with nine men in it. Hair fair and yellow, all equally beautiful. Mantles speckled with color, and above them nine bagpipes, four-tuned and ornamented. Liken thou them, Fer Rogain!"

"Those are the nine pipers that came to Conaire out of the elfmound of Bregia because of the noble tales about him. Bind, Robind, Riabind, Sibe', Dibe, Deichrind, Umall, Cumal, Ciallgilind. They will slay, but they will not be slain, for they are out of an elfmound. And they are bound to Eochaid, though they came to his son Conaire, and so will fight against him."

"Little is to be expected from them over Conaire, then. Little but

his sword, and that swung lightly." Ingcel was scornful, for he felt the loathing of the men of Erin for this coming slaughter, and feared they would break their oath to him before he got his hands on the gold and loot of the hostel.

"WHEN I was acquainted with Da Derga's house," said Mac Cecht, "this road we are on led toward his abode. It continues right up to his house, and there are seven doors to it."

"Who is this one we visit to-night?" asked the merry voice of Etain. This outing she was enjoying. Her horse danced on slender legs beside Eochaid, and every tree and bird and flowered bush was seen by her to be twice as beautiful as it was, for the magic of her friends among the elfmounds.

"Da Derga of Leinster," answered Eochaid. "he came unto me to seek a gift, and he did not come to find a refusal. A hundred kine, a hundred swine, a hundred mantles of close cloth. A hundred fine battle weapons, blue colored, tempered. Ten red gilded brooches. Ten vats good and brown. Ten thralls and ten querns I gave him. Thrice nine hounds in silver chains. A hundred race horses trained to the deer hunting. It is strange if he is surly to me tonight when reaching his abode."

"A boding came upon me when we turned aside from the way to Tara to take this road of Cuala." Etain's voice lost its merry ring, and her witch-woman's intuition sensed the threat in the night. "It seemed to my far-sight it were better to risk the rumor of the reavers in Tara than to turn aside and risk them here in this Da Derga's hostel."

"And they are planning to entrap Eochaid, where else should they lay

their trap than upon the way to Tara?"

"There are two sides to that argument," said Etain. "And they had not learned of your whereabouts, we should have been safe in Tara, while now they have more time to spy out our whereabouts, and can besiege this hostel in the night while we sleep."

"Ah, a rumor is but a rumor!" Eochaid was scornful. "It is but that I thought to avoid a trap upon the road, where a man has little chance with an ambush; while here in the hostel a man has at least a wall to place his back against."

As the party rode on in the gathering dark, ahead appeared three riders, in red, with three red steeds between their knees, and three red heads of hair.

Eochaid shuddered at the appearance, for they looked anything but human. "It is a tabu of mine for three reds to go before me to the house of a red. Given me at my birth, I cannot ignore that tabu. Who will follow them, and tell them to turn aside from me in my track?"

Mac Cecht settled his big body in the saddle, raised his huge heel to drive home a spur. "I will follow them, and turn aside they will, or my sword will taste their blood."

Mac Cecht's big mount leaped after the riders, but strangely, ride as hard as he might, they remained ever a spear cast ahead. One of the eerie riders sang over his shoulder, a rhythmic chant of words...

"Lo, Mac Cecht, great news. Through ancient men's enchantments a company of nine yields tonight."

A cold fear laid hold of Mac Cecht, and he shouted:

"Who are you, to be prophesying?"

"We ride the steeds of Donn Tetsorach from the elfmounds. Though we are alive, we are dead, for we are banished from the elfmounds. Great are the signs: destruction of life, sating of ravens, wetting of sword edges, broken shields after sundown."

In spite of Mac Cecht's effort to catch them, the three riders rode faster and disappeared into the gathering dark.

"My tabu is broken," said Eochaid, "and worse sign of ill cannot come to me."

"Let us turn back," said Etain, "those three are an omen not to ignore!"

"We'll not turn back tonight, Etain, come what may. I'm not turning into a fear-driven ninny at my age, who flits from every shadow. Did we listen always to such things, we would never leave Tara that we did not ride a dozen trails but the one we choose."

Mac Cecht thought long on the weird omen of the three red riders, and it came to him there were nine nobles in their party, though the warriors and serving men made near a hundred altogether. Mac Cecht was not cheerful.

Eochaid with his people entered the hostel, and each took his seat within.

Da Derga came to them, and showed them his warriors. Thrice fifty there were, each of them with hair to the hollow of his polls and a short cloak to his buttocks. Speckled green drawers they wore, and in their hands great clubs of thorn ringed with iron bands.

Eochaid and his fair wife tried to throw off their forebodings with laughter and talk and wine, but there came a knocking at the door. Mac Cecht threw the wide planks

open, and in the doorway stood a woman. Taller than a man, she wore a grey, woolly mantle. Her lower hair reached to her knees. Her face was vastly ugly, with great lips placed on one side of her face. She cast an evil, gloomy eye upon the gathered mighty of Erin. Eochaid felt the evil in her eye, and the cold fear that comes from the witches.

"Well, O woman," said Eochaid, "if thou art a sorceress what seest thou for us?"

"Truly I see for thee that neither fell nor flesh of thine shall escape from this place into which thou hast come, save what birds will bear away in their claws."

"Away with you" said Eochaid. "It seems a conspiracy to scare me to death this night, and it's not I can be killed that way."

EVEN AS his party made merry in spite of all the ill omens, the reavers of Ingcel and his own son Conaire were each casting their count-stone upon a cairn and advancing upon the hostel of Da Derga. For Ingcel had counted over the defense and knew it could be taken. And the stone that each threw upon the cairn would be removed after the battling, and what was still left there would tell them how many had died.

Four thousand wild reavers surrounded the hostel. Within the hostel but five hundred men to defend the King of Erin. Closer crept the army of reavers and closer...

MAC CECHT heard something of slight noises the closing army could not help but make. He leaped to his weapons, making a great clatter with the great iron-covered wooden shield, his blue-red spear, hand-fitting, his great sword too

long for any other man's hand.

Outside, the reavers heard the mighty noise of Mac Cecht's alarm, and started back from the racket, thinking a sally taking place. But the serving men peered from the doors, saw nothing in the darkness, and the alarm went for naught.

"Woe to him that shall wreak the destruction," said Lonna Druth. "Your heads will depart from you."

"Ye cannot break your oath to me, clouds of weakness are upon you..." said Ingcel, scornful of the men of Erin's loathing for the slaying of the Irishmen.

Even as they talked, Eochaid rose up from the table, put on his armor, took up his sword, and strode out the door. Mac Cecht was not alarmed without reason, after all the ill omens, he knew.

Straight out from the great lighted doorway strode Eochaid, and had not gone thirty feet before he saw the face of Conaire, his own loved son, and stretching on every side, the fierce blood-thirsty mass of the mighty gathering of reavers from three countries.

"Father," said Conaire, "the fates have dealt us a strange set of cards. Never did I reach Alba, but fell into the hands of this Ingcel. This night you must drink of death, Eochaid. Your throne and you wife Etain I will have."

Eochaid started back from the sight and the voice, throwing one hand before his face to hide this sudden too-great revelation of the bitter course that events were taking. His own son, Conaire, should be leading the werewolves against him. Curiously he was glad that Conaire lived, mingled with sorrow that he should have chosen such a path to lay his life along.

Even as Conaire waited for his father to recover from his surprise, many things took place in his mind. And little took place in the minds around him, but the reavers saw here a chance to knock off the head of the force against them, and every man knows that a headless body has no direction.

Forward rushed Mane' Unslow, clever, thinking to earn credit with Conaire for removing this chief obstacle from his path to power. And even as his gleaming blade reached for Eochaid's throat, and Eochaid reached for his own sword too late, throwing up his arm to stop the blow, even as all this happened a noble, brilliant light swept through Conaire's mind, and the darkness of evil lifted. His sword leaped singing from his sheath, leaped and swept toward Mane' Unslow like a witch's eye-glance, deadly, sure.

Even as Conaire thought: "I can never do this thing to my father who loved me," Mane' Unslow rolled in his blood, his brain-pan cleft to the forehead, his brains spilled on the ground. And the host of the reavers groaned, for they had lost their far-sight when they lost Mane' Unslow, and they had lost Conaire, the champion whom all the men of Erin would follow once Eochaid was dead.

Still moving swift and sure, though his thoughts were a wild conflict of love and duty and frustrated desire for Etain, of oaths made and broken, Conaire caught up the great body of Eochaid between his two hands, lifted him high over his head and dashed for the still open door into the hostel. And after him came the spears and curses and thrown swords of the horde of reavers, but none fatal, though when

the door swung shut behind them, he was dripping with blood from many wounds.

NOW WITHIN the hostel came a great bustle of donning of armor, of buckling on of swords and axes, of stringing of bows, and from without came a wolf-pack howling. But the reavers came no nearer, for they knew the first to pass the door would die, and none wanted first taste of death.

Now those outside who had not seen the great numbers of the outlanders outside the door, the men of Da Derga with their iron-bound clubs and wooden shields, the nine champions of Mac Cecht and Mac Cecht, made themselves ready, and burst from the door with a roar in spite of Eochaid's command to stay.

Once around the hostel these worked, clubs swinging, axes plying, shields ringing, and ever the howls of the reavers, the roars of the Da Dergas sounded, and they came back in the same door where out they went, but not the same number. Half lived to make that circuit, and half died in the round.

Etain bent over Conaire where he sat, having flung himself down in remorse and wonder at his own actions, and her white hand touched his cheek, and she said: "Wherefore did you do this, who have been sentenced to a death you did not deserve by Eochaid whom you now rescue from death?"

Conaire looked at her, and his heart sank slowly to his boots as he realized he had made it impossible that he should live to enjoy her body, and made it impossible that she should live to enjoy life, but lie in death after the rapine of the reavers was through.

"I don't know. I just could not see

Eochaid slain by those bloody traitors. I could not be one, no matter what comes of it."

"It could be that your choice would turn out wisely, Conaire, son of Eochaid!" Etain's voice was mysterious, thrilling, and the look she gave Conaire was no look a woman gives her son. The blood began again to rush through his veins, and Conaire remembered that Etain had said she was from the Elfmounds, and that all such have strange powers and fearful friends who can do what is willed without being themselves seen.

Now, even as torches were flung against the hostel, and the clash of swords, the hum of arrows, and the eager howls of the rising blood-lust of the reavers sounded ever louder, even as the seven great doors began to shudder from the rams, Etain made a sign with her small white hand, a strange sign that glowed with sudden awesome light. For it had come clear to Etain what it was she wanted, and how the night's occurrences could be turned from disaster to future happiness.

With the sign, a sending from off far in the elfmounds came and settled around the hostel, and the far gibbering and laughter of the small ones who serve, and the far-reaching search eyes of the great ones who rule in the elfmounds, came with a great number of other signs and sounds amidst a great cloud of meaning that darkened the air about the hostel.

NOW ETAIN smiled a gloomy smile, a smile that Conaire could not understand, but would have had he known that now each warrior fighting outside the hostel moved with a directing shade at his elbow, that his thought no longer

envisioned the wild carouse of victory, but only a dark will to death. Now for every man of the hostel's force that fell, five of the reavers fell.

The battle went on, strangely, mechanically the reavers moved forward against the seven doors of the hostel, and with fixed and empty faces the champions of Eochaid strode out against them, lifting axe and brandishing sword with jerky gestures like puppets on strings. Conaire saw the gloomy magic that encompassed all the movements and the fearful emptiness that sat in all the faces. for no more did the wild cheers of the reavers urge on to slaughter, or the answering roars of Mac Cecht and his defenders echo through the great feasting chamber of the hostel. Instead each man moved as though already dead, staring unseeing at his fellows, and so did those who had gone through the doors to meet the blades moved out against the barrier of bloody blades, to hew and stab and to die. The night wore on, and the reavers as well as Conaire's father's men, and the dim morning light showed of the host who had stormed against the walls of the hostel but a handful still remaining. But of those who had defended through the gloomy sorceled night, there remained men enough to count on the fingers of two hands only.

"This is the strangest battle I ever saw" said Conaire to Etain. "All this night not a cry, not a word from any man. They might all be made of wood, or be spirits of the dead, for all the real life that is in them. And now most of them lie truly dead upon the grass outside. What is it that has made this hostel such a place of magic?"

"The spell is almost ended, Conaire. You have not moved to battle

all night, while your friends fought and died about you. Do you continue to sit there till I come for you, my chosen."

Conaire suddenly realized that he had played the coward's part all through the night, sitting there listening to the eerie silence of men moving to death with silent lips, striking with swords that were but machines moving without skill or thought in the blows—and himself had not moved, but had sat and gazed into Etain's eyes, watching the strange mysteries that moved in the midnight blue of their depths, and thinking of nothing at all. And Conaire struggled to rise, to dash out into the morning and set things to right for Eochaid now that the reavers were all but slain. But not a muscle of his body could move.

Etain moved her slim body, her hip-swaying, high-bosomed, white-skinned beauty across his fixed and staring eyes, pulled back one heavy wooden shutter to look out upon the last scene of Ingcel's life. For she knew from the time that she had signed to the elfmounds watchers, that the night's events would all move according to her wishes. And her wishes just now did not include anyone but herself and the youthful, strong-limbed Conaire.

NOW ECHHAID stood before the great main door of the hostel and beside him stood the mighty form of Mac Cecht. Their armor was dented and stained with red, their chain mail hung in tatters, their swords were red to the hilt, and their faces were weary as death with the killing. Beside them stood Da Derga, his great paunch sagging with weariness, and his face desperate with what had happened, his hearty

generous soul sickened so that the thought and sorrow struggled through the ensorcelled mask that was his spell, and that still held them all. On each side of them stood two of the club-wielding warders of the hostel, their green speckled drawers naught but bloody rags, their wooden shields long since battered to splinters and cast away, their clubs, too, splintered and all but useless.

Facing these seven defenders came on still the one-eyed Ingcel, whose indestructible strength had preserved through all the night's merciless slaughter, and moved beside him still against Eochaid the fierce, dark Fer Rogain and his smaller, wirier brother, Fer Gar. Lomna Druth, whose forebodings had all been proven right, moved too, his face a bloody expressionless mask, his tall, sinewed body stripped of armor and ornament, stark naked he moved still, a broken sword in his hand. And his limbs were crissed-crossed with wounds so that fishnet seemed draped about him to hold the bloody flesh together.

Watching this last doomed struggle of her puppets, Etain peered from the great window, her bright face an eerie, beautiful apparition of eager doom, her fierce soul showing its hidden lustings, and Ingcel saw her face, and shuddered all through his great body as at a sudden cold wind from some frozen peak. For the spirit that has made women ever watch men battle and delight in the scene, the spirit that moved the Roman beauties to delight at the bloody Roman circuses, that has ever made woman the most deadly of the two sexes, that spirit was strong in Etain. But even her strong appetites sickened at the scene of slaughter that was spread about the hostel. As far as eye could reach in

the dim misty morning, dead men lay, their brains splattered, their limbs hacked off, and here and there a dying arm lifted in a last effort toward off death's creeping grasp, or some battered form crawled away on four limbs like a beast, the spell having lifted from his mind somewhat.

Etain did not smile, but neither did she weep, for Etain was not quite human, and had no sincere regard for the value of man or man's works. To her the awful battle field was but the end of some idiot's dream, and hardly to be considered as of meaning, and all those men the same, of no importance. For Etain considered *herself* of not much importance, for she was one who knew the wisdom of the past, and of magical sciences, and of what men should be and are not, and knew that she herself was but a vague reflection from some bright life-motion of long ago, and that *reality* has, in reality vastly more of substance than this life.

And with that bright mysterious face watching them as a child might watch fighting dogs—or racing horses, to two centipedes combatting for her favor, the female centipede—with some such impersonal interest she watched, and Ingcel moved his bruised and bloody lips. His one eye flashed still the battle-spirit of him, and he said: "Yield, now, Eochaid, and the night's bloodshed will be at an end. Have ye not had enough of it?"

Eochaid looked at Ingcel, and at Fer Rogain and Fer Gar, foster brothers of Conaire, and at Lomna Druth the traitor to him, and at the ten who stood behind them. And he looked at the near-dead seven who were all that was left of the cavalcade who had entered the hostel of Da Derga last night. He measured the

great bulk of his champion, Mac Cecht, against the size and strength of Ingcel, and there was little to choose between, but Ingcel looked the fresher.

Eochaid thought of the fate of Erin, and if he gave it now to Ingcel it would ever be naught but a sea-haven for far roving reavers on the seas, and all the coasts of Europe would curse the Irish forever.

Eochaid lifted his sword, and cursed Ingcel. "Since we have fought thus far, scum from the sea, I see no reason to turn coward at this hour." For the spell that had been on them still held, and would so hold till Etain lifted it. For she had not yet gotten what she willed of the night's events.

MAC CECHT did not wait for his king to engage the sword of the gigantic Ingcel, but pushed him aside. "This behemoth is my meat, Eochaid. Do you despatch the rest of the raven bait, and we will face the morning clean of all stench. Glad will our mother earth be, to be rid of these werewolves."

Ingcel's voice rang in answer like the clang of an army's swords beating on shields. "Come on, Mac Cecht. I shall crush your bones, and your bowels will be scattered over all the hostel. The clots of your brains will be the ground whereon I shall slay Eochaid, once you are dead, and Erin shall be mine."

The double-length sword of Ingcel swept up and hovered over Mac Cecht's head like a thunder cloud of black iron, and the humming of its whirl-stroke was like a hive of bees. But Mac Cecht moved forward under the terrible sword of black iron, and his own gleaming blade rang against the tattered mail of Ingcel's ribs even as Ingcel brought the

weight of his blow down upon his head.

Mac Cecht's helmet turned the blow, and the blade rang a bell as it showered sparks over the two bloody figures, standing now chest to chest, legs wide spread, and going at it like wood choppers. Main strength was the stock in trade of both of them, and both of them had always had so much of that they needed little skill to overcome their enemies. Now it was main strength against main strength, and each hewed at the other, and at each stroke blood flew and flesh gave. Etain's eyes glittered with excitement, for it was a sight worth waiting the night through to see, two such champions meeting face to face.

Ingcel was the taller, but Mac Cecht, his red hair bristling along all his limbs like fine flame, was the broader. Each tried to beat down the other's blade by might, to strike home a blow in spite of all obstruction, and their blades rang again as they met in mid-air, and at each blow their frames shuddered at the shock, and the ground quivered.

Eochaid moved against the tall, naked figure of Lomna Druth, but Fer Rogain and Fer Gar, in better shape, moved against him together, knowing that their actions were traitorous and death would come to them if Eochaid lived. The flickering of the blades were like heat lightning, and Eochaid gave ground before the two of them, but Da Derga moved to his side and together they held.

The ten warriors behind Ingcel moved toward the club wielders of Da Derga, and the clubs clashed again with the bloody swords of the reavers, and the gibbering shapes of the witch-sending moved with them. The eyes of Etain approved, for she

had commanded and it must be performed. Now each time one of the reavers fell wounded to death, one of the men of Da Derga fell to earth beside him, and neither died of wounds, but seemed to be dead from some other cause. For none cried out, or said any word, or called to his Gods, but fought and died in silence. In no time Da Derga and Eochaid and Mac Cecht stood against Ingcel and Fer Gar and Fer Rogain and all the others on the cleared land of the hostel were dead.

The bloody, naked body of Lomna Druth lay still where it had stood with a broken sword, and though no man had moved against him, he was dead.

STILL OVER the hostel hung the cloud of the witch-sending from the elfmounds, and still within the mist-cloud moved and gibbered the unseen shapes of the creatures that serve, and the glittering eyes of Etain watched it all and waited, and likewise waited the shapes of the fear she had brought upon the reavers and the defenders alike.

Conaire sat still as death at the table within the hostel where he had sat all night, and not a muscle could he move, but his ears heard the mighty battle strokes of Ingcel and Mac Cecht. Before his eyes was only the form of Etain, where she stood at the window, and in his mind was only the lure she had put there not so long ago, and he could not shake that off or move to anything, even in his mind, but sat paralyzed like a bird by the eyes of a snake.

Before the eyes of his mind the face of Etain was the center of a great, blood-red flower, coming closer and closer to him, her breasts were the great lower petal of the flower, strewn with golden grains of

pollen, and she smiled at him, her red-forked tongue flickering in and out. And on the red moistness of the tongue were likewise the golden pollen grains. He saw the flower nearing him and could not move, and in his mind the great red petals closed about him and he ceased to be as a man and became but a part of the growth of the voracious life of the flower.

Even as this strange vision came to Conaire, Etain raised her hand as if weary of the battle scene before the hostel, and as she raised her hand the hanging cloud descended upon the struggling figures, mighty Mac Cecht and dread one-eyed Ingcel, stout Da Derga and Fer Gar, Eochaid and Fer Rogain.

As the cloud descended about them, Ingcel could be seen to freeze into stiffness and his long legs carried him straight toward the extended sword of Mac Cecht so that the sword passed through his chest below the ribs. Even as the great shimmering sword of Mac Cecht transfixed Ingcel, he gave a great scream of anger as the trammeling witchcraft seized him, and crashed his own blade down upon the wide shoulders of Mac Cecht. The black blade passed through the great muscles of the neck and down crosswise into his chest, so that blood spouted out like a fountain. They stood thus for an instant, then fell crashing one across the other, two mighty heroes felled by a craft they did not understand.

Fer Gar and Da Derga, hearing the crash of the giants' fall, did not cease their own circling. Fascinated by the glittering interweave of their weapon play, they could not stop. And even as the crash sounded in their ears, Da Derga pierced through the clever sword play of Fer Gar

and his sword stabbed upward through Fer Gar's throat below the chin, straight up into his brain pan. And, falling, Fer Gar's sword descended point first into the great paunch of Da Derga, the hostel keeper, and his dying hand left the blade there in the paunch, the haft sticking upward and trembling in the morning sun, glittering and trembling before Da Derga's eyes.

Da Derga looked at the jeweled haft of that sword for three heart beats, then sank upon the ground, sitting there for a time as if in deep thought before he rolled over in death and lay in a spreading pool of his blood.

Eochaid and Fer Rogain still circled, and Etain watched the black mist of the witch-sending close tighter about them, ever stiffer and more jerky their motions of thrust and parry, of slash and leap and slash again until they were but mere parodies of motion. Then slowly, slowly the sword of Fer Rogain approached the throat of Eochaid and slid along its tanned columnar strength, and Eochaid stood with his throat cut half through, and stark puzzlement in his face. His last anger made his motion more rapid, and he thrust the wide sword deep into the loins of Fer Rogain, for he could not lift it higher. Fer Rogain gave a pain-wracked scream and fell to the ground, writhing, for the wound was a death wound. And even as his writhing body grew still, Eochaid tottered and fell across him.

Of all the strong champions and men of war who had entered that terrible destruction under Ingcel of

Britain, not one was left alive but Conaire. And of all the company that been under the roof of the hostel of Da Derga, not one was left alive but Etain, the queen of Erin.

Now the black cloud of the sending lifted, and a sulphurous smell was all that was left.

CONAIRE rose from the seat that had held him the night long and moved toward the lifted arms of Etain. Etain worked upon him yet one more spell, so that the vision and the knowing of the night's events clouded in his mind, and he said: "What has happened this night, Etain, I feel it were the beginning or the end of the world!"

"You don't have to know what happened, Conaire. It is really the beginning of the world for you, and for many another the end, and what of that? You will learn that those who love the women of the elfmounds do not care to inquire much into the whys and wherefores of life. There are many things such as I know that such as you do better not knowing, and what of it, Conaire?"

Conaire looked into the flowered soft face, the red, red lips parted over the shimmering teeth, and once deep into those now sea-bright eyes. Conaire said:

"A man named Conaire wants you, Etain."

"A woman named Etain wants you, Conaire!" Etain opened those white, ensorceling arms to Conaire.

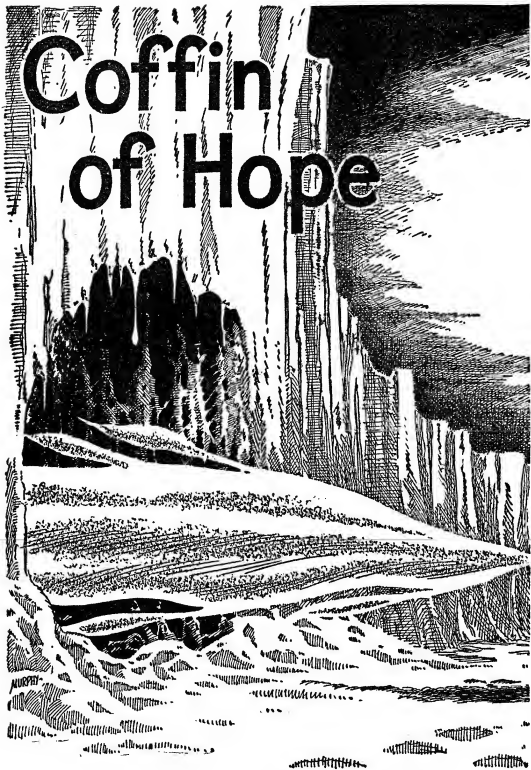
Which got what they wanted is not hard to decide.

THE END

"I PAINT FROM DEATH!"

One of the most unusual stories of the year!
READ IT NEXT MONTH IN AMAZING STORIES

Coffin of Hope



By LEE FRANCIS

They had slept for over a thousand years, and now they had awakened, looking for the new world of man — a world of weird beasts!

THE CORRIDOR was dark, for the pale, greenish light that came through the ice barrier. The light bathed the ceiling and tinted long rows of pillars that supported it. Beyond the corridor, light had not penetrated for a thousand years.

The first man was young. Perhaps twenty-four. His clean, well shaped face was at rest, a slight smile touching the lips. A shock of blond hair was combed straight back from his high forehead. He was stretched flat

on his back on a couch of soft, rubbery stuff. The couch was one of three, lined up in perfect symmetry, along the right wall of the corridor.

Beside each couch stood a large, square metal cabinet. Projecting from the cabinets were lenses, focused upon three men. Watching over them and waiting for the time.

All the mechanical details were identical. Wires ran from the metal boxes, and were clamped to the arms, legs and chests of the men. Transpar-



The intense rays struck the ice wall and opened the sealed entrance to the cave . . .

ent tubes, carrying tiny lines of fluid, led to each right arm. Needles fed the veins. Needles that had been feeding these three for a thousand years.

The man on the second couch was about fifty-five. His face was lined and the texture of the skin was like leather. His hair was silver-white, combed long down his neck. His eyes, open and staring sightlessly toward the vaulted roof, were pale blue.

The third was small and rather thin. His skin was pale and his hands, white and delicate. The hands of a man who had never done physical labor.

Each man, each article in the corridor, was covered by a thin coating of crystal clear ice.

At a precise moment, the silence of the corridor was broken by the sudden humming sound in each of the cabinets. Three lights went on and amber color warmth flooded over each of the men. The ice disappeared.

Beyond that, very little seemed to be happening. The process was slow. It would be many hours before any of them moved. Perhaps—never.

THE THING that amazed Roger Warren was the most complete comfort he felt upon awakening. He opened his eyes and rolled his head slowly from side to side. It was as though he had only dozed. Startled by the realization of what had actually happened, he sat up abruptly. A painful twinge hit his right arm. Grinning sheepishly, he dropped back and touched the needle that entered his arm. He drew it out carefully. He sat up again.

"I'll need more food in an hour," he said in a soft voice. He was, through habit, memorizing these things in his own mind. "Formula One."

"Repeat every word aloud," he said.

"Stanton said it would be necessary to keep ourselves alert in case of accident."

He released himself from the clamps and placed the wires carefully over the machine as he stood up. The motor stopped humming. He stared at the machine.

"Thank you," he said gravely, as though speaking to a very good friend.

He flexed his arm and leg muscles slowly. He stood slightly over six feet tall, and he was well bronzed and smoothly muscled. He brushed the unruly hair back from his eyes and smiled. The smile faded as he wondered if it had really happened as it should. Had he actually slept the required length of time?

He leaned hurriedly over the cabinet and studied the gauge carefully. He sighed and the smile came back.

"Calendar chart regulated by the food-flow gauge," he said. "One-thousand years and, approximately, ten hours. Everything is all right."

His voice rose in exaltation.

"A thousand years."

He spoke those last words as though they answered a prayer. He went around the end of the couch and looked down with some concern at Phillip Stanton.

"Hello, Roger," Stanton said. His eyes were alive now, and there was a twinkle in them. He had caught Warren off guard. Warren hadn't expected Stanton to awaken so quickly. With an odd lump in his throat, he said;

"Hello Phillip."

So *this* was how men greeted each other after being separated by a wall of sleep for a thousand years?

He helped Stanton free himself from the wires and the feeding needle. Stanton arose. He was slightly unsteady on his feet, as they

gripped each other's hands. Stanton said;

"It isn't—a false alarm, is it?"

Roger Warren shook his head. A grin widened his ample mouth. He remembered how he had awakened with the same fear.

"You are looking at a man who has been frozen into sleep for a thousand years," he said. "Phillip, we've done it. The experiment was a success."

Stanton sighed.

"I'm glad," he said simply.

Another voice, slightly harsher than Stanton's, but filled with the same enthusiasm, interrupted them.

"I guess you two came around a little faster than I. I've been listening to enough of your conversation so that I guess we're successful."

Warren hurried to the third couch and helped James Cragg free himself from the wires. Cragg looked tired. He had worked hard during the study that had led up to this wild scheme. The same pallor showed on his face, now that he was once again awake.

"Good Lord, Roger," he said, even before he was on his feet, "do you and Phillip realize just what a wonderful thing we have done? It's—it's almost beyond the grasp of the human mind!"

Warren said;

"It's over with and we have work ahead."

"I still can't believe it," Cragg said. "We've got exactly what we wanted. We've succeeded in preserving the life span for a thousand years. We are as fresh as a bunch of school boys."

STANTON, by his very age, came to Cragg's side and put a hand on the professor's shoulder.

"Don't attempt to grasp the full meaning all at once, Jim," he said. "As leader of the group, I suggest we

follow the instructions I outlined before we slept. It will busy our minds, and there are certain tasks that must be attended to at once. We can't afford any delay, now that we are to live as normal humans again."

"I'll open the laboratory and prepare the formula," Roger Warren said. He was eager to be out about their work. Already the hot blood of youth was again coursing through his body.

Stanton nodded approvingly.

"And Jim and I will start the generators," he added. "We'll need warmth and food first. They are of primary importance."

Warren moved swiftly across the corridor toward the laboratory door. His eyes caught the details of this cavern home that was so old, and yet as familiar as yesterday to his eyes.

He had been taught back in that dim world of the past, that action was necessary. Direct action that would bring this frozen room back to life. It was all as they had left it. Vast chambers carved from the stone. A half dozen huge doors leading to the chemistry laboratory, (his private domain), the food lockers, the generator room, the study.

Rooms for everything a teacher, a scientist, and a chemistry professor would need to re-educate a world.

The ice, had done a good job. It had preserved everything as they had hoped it would. The temperature remained the same here, year after year.

His fingers contacted the intense cold of the laboratory door. He turned the handle and opened it. It stuck, and he had to kick away the ice and the white frost that had gathered around the sill.

Farther down the corridor, he heard Stanton and Cragg having the same trouble with the door to the

generator chamber. Then the chemistry laboratory was before him, white, clean, with tables and long rows of shelves filled with test tubes, bottles of precious fluids, and the burners he had to have before they could use the frozen liquids.

The cold chilled him, through the warm, leather jacket and the ankle length breeches. Though the light that came through the ice sealed entrance to the cavern, lighted the laboratory a bit, he stood still listening for the hum of the first generator.

It came, and with it, the first rhythmic turning of the heater fans and the sudden brilliance of the lamps. He held his arm over his eyes until they accustomed themselves to the bright glow. There was another warmth, deep inside him, for the men who labored over the machinery in the generator chamber.

"Good," he said.

The room was long and low. It heated quickly. The small fluid heater on the first bench, was red hot already. He found the brown sealed bottle labeled, "Formula One."

He carried it across the room, handling it with all the care that had been schooled into him through long training. He slid the bottle into the container of the fluid heater and closed the cover. Standing there, listening as the other two generators snapped to life, he thought about the things they had planned. It was only a dream then. Now it was reality.

It seemed like last night that Philip Stanton had talked to them before they stretched out, full length, on the couches. He almost worshipped Stanton. Stanton was the one scientist on earth who was not frightened at the thought of facing reality. He and Cragg could thank the older man for this.

THE DOOR to the laboratory opened and his companions came in. Stanton, proud-shouldered and straight as a ramrod, came toward Warren, a smile of increasing confidence on his face.

Roger Warren rubbed his hands to first hurdle. The generators are in perfect running order."

Roger Warren rubbed his hands together.

"Sort of an old home week," he confessed. "Our dinner, though it isn't exactly a steak or french fried potatoes, will be ready in a moment."

Behind Stanton, James Cragg chuckled. Cragg, though he was still frightened of the job ahead, felt that whatever might happen, the three of them were perfectly fitted for each other. He knew that there would be times when he must lean on these two, and take from them, the courage of facing reality. Cragg was a teacher and a dreamer. The thought of such a world as they might face, frightened him.

"Let's have a taste of this Formula One you rate so highly, Rog," he said. "I'm hungry enough to start in on a live cow."

Warren opened the fluid heater and lifted the bottle out. With a pair of asbestos gloves, to protect his hands from the heat, he poured three cups of the formula. Each man took one.

Stanton grimaced and drained his as soon as it had cooled enough. Cragg took a sip, made a wry face, and tried again.

"You'll have to do better than that, Jim," Warren told him, and following Stanton's example, finished the drink.

"I suppose so," Cragg admitted. "I wish that our stomachs were up to digesting a steak."

He finally managed the remainder of the cup.

Roger Warren sat down on one of the tables and crossed his legs.

"I'm not going to tell you how I feel about all this," he said. "I suppose my feelings are shared by both of you."

"As far as the teacher in me is concerned," Cragg admitted. "I'm afraid I'm a little timid and frightened about the whole thing. I never was much for this adventure stuff."

Phillip Stanton looked thoughtful.

"There have been many yesterdays in our life that we know nothing about," he said. "We're concerned with today and all the tomorrows. I only hope that the world is in a far better condition than we expected. I hope the events we feared have never taken place."

Cragg nodded in agreement.

"Perhaps we've wasted our time. I fervently hope so."

Roger Warren chuckled.

"We've wasted nothing," he said. "We would have lived out our years in a savage, war torn world. Now we live in a new age. If it is better, then we'll make the best of what we are offered. Be it good or bad, we have a definite place in it. As for me, I'm ready to go and find out what has happened to our planet. I used to be quite fond of the place, at least before our people went mad with the lust for blood."

THE THREE men were garbed in heavy winter clothing. The scene at the entrance could have been the camp of any 1950 expedition into the frozen north. A huge snowtractor stood like a polished monster, waiting to plunge out into the swirling land of snow that was beyond the barrier. The motors were warming up, their great power chambers purring under the fuel that Roger Warren had fed through the lines.

Crouched on his knees before the barrier, Warren opened the valves of the fire-gun and aimed the roaring flame at the ice that sealed them into the cavern. It sputtered and licked greedily at the wall of ice. Water shot back in a mist and a pool of it formed on the frozen stone floor. Warren moved back slowly, and the fire gouged a hole through to the sunlight.

A huge sheet of ice fell forward and crashed outside. Warren stood up and turned off the flame. He discarded the dark-glassed helmet and asbestos gloves. He coiled the feeder wire around the gun and attached the gun to the rack on the side of the tractor.

"At least everything above the arctic circle looks the same," he shouted to the two men who were already in the cab of the tractor.

Beyond the opening of the cavern, the sun shone down upon endless, glittering snow, and rugged, jutting ice peaks. The dry, penetrating chill penetrated the corridor, robbing it of the heat they had been able to get from the generators.

Warren climbed stiffly into the cab of the tractor. Cragg was seated in the co-driver's chair, his safety straps in place, gloved hand on the feeder-control button. Behind him, Phillip Stanton stood with his hands gripping the back of Cragg's chair.

"I'm like a child, Roger," Stanton confessed. "Now that we're ready, I feel as though the delay will be unbearable. Can we leave at once?"

Warren knew how the scientist felt. Regardless of what happened once they reached the United States, they were going *home*. A home that none of them had seen for a thousand years. He sat down in the empty driver's seat and strapped the heavy belts across his legs. Behind him,

Stanton was duplicating the process, making himself safe in the third seat.

Warren touched the power pedal and the motors roared, full of all the strength they would need for the journey south.

"Everything in order, Jim?" Warren asked.

James Cragg's eyes moved over the instrument gauges. His mouth felt dry. He licked his lips and said;

"As ready as we'll ever be, Roger. I've a feeling that when those lugs start digging into the ice, we'll be away on a journey that we might regret. It's a frightening experience, this returning to a land you've been away from so long."

Warren chuckled. It was a deep, wholehearted chuckle.

"Faint heart never won, Jim," he said. "It's a little frightening perhaps, but it's also the greatest adventure that any man ever faced."

He yanked the feeder-lever back as far as it would go, and the heavy, armor-plated lugs sank into the ice. The tractor creaked and reared up in protest and then the lugs took hold. The huge machine shot out through the cavern entrance and sank deeply into the soft snow.

Warren pushed down the small button marked "Gripper", and huge spikes shot out of each lug and found footing in the ice. The tractor gained speed and hurtled away from the cavern.

None of them spoke for ten minutes. Then Phillip Stanton said;

"Look back. It's the last glimpse you'll have of your home for a long time. You may want to remember it."

Warren turned, caught a glimpse of Cragg's frightened but determined face, and then saw the tiny, black speck behind them that was all he could see of the cavern.

After that one last look toward the

cavern, he had no time to think of it again. Driving the tractor forward, avoiding the jutting ice peaks and floundering swiftly through the valleys of deep snow, was enough to keep any man, regardless of his youth, forever vigilant against aching muscles and tired, half-blinded eyes.

PHILLIP Stanton had been studying the horizon for the past hour, his eyes searching for the city he knew they must find. At last he saw the dark outline of the city against the rising sun. He pointed ahead eagerly.

"The first major stronghold of civilization that we've reached," he said.

Edmonton, Canada, thus far only a far-off outline of a city against the still dark sky. Stanton continued to watch, feeling uneasy.

Two hours later, their worst fears were realized. Edmonton, the first city on their line of march south, was in a shambles.

The three men in the cab of the tractor were tired and dispirited. There was here, a horrible lack of life and spirit. A feeling of being completely lost. It pervaded throughout the wrecked, wilderness-choked city, and it entered the cab and made them all feel small and unimportant in facing this terrible condition.

Naked walls, what few remained, stood with weird fingers of stone and brick pointing to the sky. Rubble, everywhere, was buried in earth mounds and covered by stunted trees and bushes. Roads were only outlines where grass had long since poked stubborn fingers upward to hide man's work.

Roger Warren made radio active tests of the territory. All tests were negative.

"We will have to search the place," Stanton said. "It will be safe enough. No man-made hell could last this long."

THREE hours later, they met at the snow tractor. None of them had found any sign of life. James Cragg summed up the situation.

"I've walked over every rubble pile in the city, he said disgustedly. "Nothing but junk. Not even a den where an animal might live."

"No human tracks outside the city," Warren added. "A few animal tracks in the forest."

There was very little more to be said. That night a new fear came over the group. The fear that atomic war had done a complete job of wiping the human race from the earth.

The following morning, they moved south once more. They didn't talk much.

* * *

It was always the same. They planned to visit every city in the North and South American Continent.

This would be necessary if they were to have the complete answer to their quest. Food was no problem. Already, Stanton had found old fruits and nuts, familiar to them all, growing in the first warm valleys they entered. Enough formula food was packed in the tractor to feed them indefinitely. Fuel pellets for the tank would keep the motors running for an estimated five years. As soon as they left the snowcountry behind, Roger Warren released the wheel arrangement under the tractor and the heavy lugs shot upward out of sight under the body. The wheels made their speed greater and the travel was more comfortable.

One night, a month after they left their base, the three gathered around

the small table in the supply room of the tractor.

"Phillip," Roger Warren said suddenly, "we know that the atomic blasts didn't kill everything. I've seen wild life some distance away. The forests and the flowers have grown even thicker than we ever saw them. The seed wasn't killed. Then why should the seed of the human race also be missing?"

There had been several discussions like this. Each time they felt a little less lonely. Each time, they found hope for a few more days of intensive search.

"Tomorrow we'll reach San Francisco," Stanton said hopefully. "Seattle was a graveyard on a hill. We can only hope that San Francisco is more than that. Why we haven't found at least a few humans, I don't know. Perhaps they've been driven south. Perhaps they lost the art of fighting the elements of the north."

"We can't stop looking," Cragg said. "We've got to search out every possibility."

"On the other hand," Warren said, "why not face the facts. If men and women were left on earth, why haven't they come back to their cities? The last of the atomic wars must have ended over eight hundred years ago. Some of them would have drifted back."

* * *

A man's mind can endure only so much strain. Like a tightly wound watch, it will break. San Francisco, a rubble heap on a hill. The Golden Gate, a gaping, water filled bay, a single strand of steel that twisted and lashed in the air where a bridge had once hung.

Then, south again. Always south. Driving themselves against the urge to give up.

Here and there, Warren saw bits

of concrete. A spot or two where the grass had not grown. Places where the valleys were burned and nothing lived again. Mostly, nature had been able to creep back and reclaim what was hers.

Then—Warren saw a man.

"By God, it is," James Cragg shouted wildly. "I can see him. See, there close to the trees. Maybe a half mile. He's just a small shadow against the trees."

Warren clashed the gears as he whirled the tractor around and rushed in the direction Cragg was pointing. At once, they were all talking wildly.

"I saw him a little way back," Cragg shouted excitedly. "I got it all figured out now. Remember, we didn't find them in the north. All men and women have moved south to the warm country. They haven't anything left to work with. They're hidden down here in the warm country where life is simple for them."

"Waiting for us," Stanton said quietly, "although of course, they don't except help from anyone."

Roger Warren could see the man clearly now. See him as he turned and dashed into the forest.

"He's frightened of us," he said. "We'll have a hard time finding him in that tangle."

"But we have to catch him," Stanton groaned.

THE TRACTOR halted, its ugly snout against the undergrowth.

"This is as far as we can go," Warren said, and snapped off the switch.

"Out and after him!" Stanton cried. "Try not to frighten him too badly. This may be our one opportunity."

They hurriedly deserted the tractor. Warren was the last one out. Before he reached the ground, Stanton was already out of sight, shouting at

the man they pursued.

Warren could hear Stanton and Cragg, panting, shouting as they fought their way through the forest.

He followed, awed by the terrific height of the trees, the wealth of rotted, fallen logs over which he had to struggle. Here the forest took over and the cities were forgotten.

He heard Cragg cry out.

"There he is. Head him off, Philip. There to your left!"

Then Stanton's voice.

"I've got him. My God, Cragg, he's a fighter. I don't want to hurt him."

Warren ran as fast as he could. He broke into a little clearing to see Stanton sitting astride his man. Then his heart sank as he saw the ugly, pitted face, covered with black hair. Saw the queer stumps that once had been arms. Stumps that were covered with smooth flesh at the shoulders, where limbs had never grown.

No wonder Stanton had captured him so easily. This was only part of a man...

* * *

It was late. The night was warm and a fire was burning lazily near the tractor. Birds sang in the forest, as though the sun had not gone down. It was a gentle, quiet world. A world of dreams. They had found their first human, and in their success, had found failure.

The man without arms sat alone. His eyes were bright and intelligent. He seemed to have no wish to escape now. His loins were covered by the skin of a small animal. Warren stared at him but the armless man did not seem to resent that.

"No memory of things past," Warren said.

Stanton shook his head. He had retained his keen interest in the search for many months. Now, he didn't seem to care. The exhaustion had pen-

etrated his body—his soul.

"I had never considered this possibility," he said at last. "We know the theory of mutants. I recall that some scientists said the atomic force might change our whole physical set-up. That there was a possibility our bodies might be changed. I never thought to see it. Here we have man, who has forgotten he ever had arms. The atomic power did that. In addition to physical change, it probably changed the entire plan of the mind and brain. Rog, it isn't much to look forward to, this educating of humans who are no longer really humans at all."

"Wait a minute," Cragg protested. "You mean they might *all* be armless? That this isn't an accident?"

Roger Warren shook his head.

"Worse than that, Jim," he said. "The blast of atomic power would probably produce a hybrid. Men without legs. Men with more than the ordinary pair of legs. The reaction was so powerful that it evidently touched everyone. Some may be normal. We'll find those with all sorts of ugly changes. The whole atomic order of things has been disturbed. They would go on breeding, without realizing that such breeding should be controlled. Result—God knows how many of—of *these* we'll find."

He pressed his fingers against tired, throbbing eyes.

"No use worrying yet. He is the first. Perhaps he'll lead us to the others. Perhaps we'd be happier if he didn't."

The armless creature did not talk. He seemed to understand them, however, as he leaned forward, smiling at every word. He *could* not speak. There was a mouth, but no tongue in that mouth. The art of talking had long since been denied him.

"He's friendly enough," Stanton ad-

mitted. "I think he wants to help us."

IN THE FOREST, Roger Warren took the lead. They had been walking steadily for three hours. The armless one went ahead of them all, pausing occasionally to wait for them to catch up. The forest grew thinner. Great rock ledges rose upward, toward the hills.

Warren watched the eager smile on the man's face.

"You're wrong in one theory, Stanton," he called back. "You said he looked as though he wanted to help us. It's the other way around. I'm sure that he knows we've come to help him. I think he realized from the first that we were here for a definite purpose."

They stood in the clearing and stared upward at the bare foothills. For the first time, they were looking at the cave city of the Western Slope.

After studying the hundreds of cave entrances on the face of the hills, James Cragg spoke:

"Here is your new civilization," he said. "This explains Seattle, San Francisco, the others."

There was no other explanation. In rough, broken, lines, hundreds of caves covered the entire face of the foothills for as far as the eye could see. The mountains were pitted with them, as though a vast flock of swallows had made their homes there. Stanton, panting from the rigorous workout he had received, looked at their guide.

"He wants us to go on," he said.

The man was running ahead, then back again, repeating the process like a dog who wishes his masters to follow. They knew what they were to see. At least, knew part of it. Would it be even worse than they expected?

On the smooth ground before the caves, a large circle had been made

many years ago. Stones were lined around the edge of the circle, and a huge, flat boulder occupied the exact center. The three men stood atop that boulder and watched the remnants of a civilization drift into the circle.

They were above the throng that was gathering. Men, women and children came slowly down from the caves and moved closer. They were like lost souls, passing in review.

Warren hated those long minutes. He felt like a hateful God, staring down at those who were less fortunate than he. He saw the eager, hopeful faces.

Men without arms. Children walking on four legs. Women without legs at all, dragging their bodies along with skinny, stretched arms. There were thousands of them. How many, he didn't even dare guess. They kept on coming, until the vast circle was a sea of white, bobbing faces.

Then the armless guide was at their side again, springing gracefully to the top of the stone. He pointed at Warren and motioned downward toward the crowd. Warren looked and caught his breath.

A girl drew close to the rock and jumped to his side. She was young. Her head was bowed and she did not look up at him. The armless guide made queer noises in his throat and placed his hand on her shoulder. She looked up then, straight into Warren's eyes.

"If you are Gods," she said in a gentle voice, "be kind to us. We have suffered for many years. You would have been kinder to stay away."

"She can talk," Cragg said in a strained voice. "She's—like us."

"Shut up," Warren said quickly. Not then, not ever afterwards, did he know why he spoke like that to Jim

Cragg. It was as though Cragg had broken some wonderful spell that only he and the girl should share. Cragg had every right to speak. He didn't realize it then, though. He just kept looking at the girl.

SHE WAS slim, and graceful, built like a dream. She wore only the animal skin at her waist, and the remainder of her body was only slightly tanned and as smooth as satin.

"You are not crippled like the others," he said.

Her face turned very pink. He knew that she was frightened.

"I am marked, also," she said quietly. "Worse than the others."

Phillip Stanton had been standing behind Warren. He moved forward and addressed the girl.

"We aren't Gods, child. We are three men who escaped the wars. We've come back to help all of you. We have brought the means to help. Will you tell them that?"

His arm indicated the gathering.

The girl did not take her eyes from Warren's face. She continued to speak directly to him. He would have sworn that she didn't even hear Stanton.

"Don't *you* understand? Ever since I awakened in this place, I've been waiting for only one person. I've been waiting for you."

Roger Warren had never been touched so deeply. There was a great mystery here. A mystery that he had to solve. It troubled him. The girl was telling him that she would do anything he wished her to do. Why?

"You must not say things like that," he said. "Listen to me carefully. Answer my questions, and then try to help us. We are going to help all of your people."

She shuddered, but she nodded her head and watched his lips closely.

There seemed to be no one present but him.

"Whatever you tell me, I will do."

She stepped close to him. She was magnificent in her loyalty to this man. Whatever he said, she would do. Where ever he went, she would never be away from him—not now that he had come.

Warren looked from Cragg to Stanton. They nodded at him. Cragg said; "Okay, if you're the only one she'll talk to, give her our story. Ask her about the remainder of civilization. We've got to find out what the problem is. Then we'll face it."

Warren looked at the girl once more. She was like a magnet, trying to draw everything from his mind and his heart.

"Are there many left?" he asked.

She understood everything he asked. Understood even beyond the words he used. She knew that he referred not only to those present but to the others.

"There are twenty cave cities," she said. "Three on this continent and the remainder across the seas. There are fifty Originals, like myself. The remainder of them were crippled by the Power. We Originals are isolated and kept away from each other. We cannot propagate. Eventually we will die.

"We Originals were touched not on our body, but in our souls. We are not attracted to anyone, save the one person on earth who is our mate. I have never met my mate, until today."

"You must not say things like that," he told her. "Where are the cities?"

She said;

"This is the western cave city. There is one in the middle west, where once the city of Denver existed. The other is carved from the ruins under the city of New York. I speak these names for they have been taught

to us. I don't know their true meanings, if a meaning really exists."

WARREN looked beyond her, toward the pitiful gathering of men and women.

"There are only fifty—" he was going to say *perfect people*, but he hesitated and said, "like you?"

She nodded.

"Where are they?"

"At the middle west cave city," she said. "We are isolated there and kept apart. We must have no social life together. I was brought here because I understand the old language and speak it better than most. My people do not hate me. You see, some of our ancestors escaped the Power by hiding in the north. I am the offspring of one of these Originals. In time, I will die. I have no right to carry on the Original race."

She shuddered.

"Why do they wish to kill you?"

"Because the largest group is not like me, and they can't stand the thought of an Original race growing up among them. I will not be harmed. I will live my life, but will not be allowed to give birth to others like me."

Roger Warren understood the intense loneliness in her. Understood why she had been attracted to him.

"Tell them what we have told you," he said. "Tell them that we ask nothing of them. That we are prepared to help them."

"First I must know from where you have come," she said. "They asked me that."

Warren talked swiftly, trying to forget her as a woman. Reporting everything that had happened.

For an instant, there was hope in her eyes. Then her shoulders drooped.

"I'm afraid that we are no longer capable of learning great things," she said. "We are so split among our-

selves. Many little groups each pitting itself more than the other. Each fighting over petty things."

Her voice sank to a whisper.

"There is hardly a memory left of the past."

Gently he placed both his hands on her shoulders.

"This will sound like a wild dream to you," he admitted. "But remember that we existed here long before the others. Our heritage goes back to the days before the power came to destroy you all. We *know* that as long as the human mind is capable of learning, we can teach what we know. It's only a matter of time and patience.

He felt her shudder under the contact of his hands. He felt the warmth of her body, like the warmth of summer sending out strength to him.

"I will try to make them understand," she said softly.

IN THE DAYS that followed, new hope was born in the people of the caves. Warren named the girl Blossom, and she went with them to the tractor.

Through the girl, Warren told the people that Stanton, Cragg and himself had come to help them. He explained that they could learn how to rebuild their cities, and gain knowledge of new foods, clothing, and building materials.

The people refused to believe that these three had come down to them from past centuries, but they smiled and accepted help. To the people, these three were of the Originals who had closely guarded the secrets of the past and were now ready to divulge their knowledge for a price. What the price would be, they did not yet know. They would find out.

It was Blossom who told Warren what would happen. They sat together in the forest, for the girl was never

far from his side now. She talked for hours about the things that she knew.

"My father died a short time ago," she said. "I don't know when my mother died. We were separated. I will soon be sent back to the others. They don't like to be reminded of us."

Warren said;

"You would have loved the old world. It was wonderful, if people had only had the intelligence to think more of their heritage."

She had learned to believe that Warren and the others really came out of the past. She had heard the whole story from his lips, and there was no choice but to believe anything he told her.

"Don't be angry with my people for not understanding," she begged. "They *are* my people. The Power changed them. They are still human. It is not their fault that they are..."

She halted and her face was pale. She didn't speak for a moment.

She took both his hands in hers.

"I have been forbidden to speak to you about myself," she said in a tender voice. "I want you to understand me. Roger, this—this attraction for you. It isn't because I'm lonely."

He knew that. He knew why, for she loved him no more than he loved her.

"We, who still live in the Original form," Blossom was saying, "had to be attracted to one person. Once there were several hundred of us. Then we were forbidden to mate, because our bodies were good to look at, and theirs were horrible."

She bent forward and kissed him on the cheek.

Her eyes were wide when he took her into his arms. Her fingers touched his neck and locked around his shoulders. The warmth that had been hers, spread through him.

"Blossom," Warren said softly.

She moved away from him gently.

"Listen to me, Roger," she said. "You are my mate. If you go, I will die. If you die, I will die also. That is why I must tell you of the danger."

He was suddenly cold, knowing that she would not speak like this unless she was badly frightened.

"What danger?"

"My people think you have come here for personal gain," she said. "They think you are Originals, like myself. They will gather all the knowledge that you can give them, and then you'll be isolated like us, and will die without giving birth to our kind. They will give you the worst possible death—a death of loneliness and isolation."

THE PEOPLE of all the caves across the continent gathered at the headquarters on the western slope. They came in long, wandering caravans, on foot, bringing the few things they possessed. Armless people, so terribly deformed that never again would they look human. But there was one comfort in their coming. They still thought. They still reacted as human beings reacted. They were willing to profit by learning.

But with the coming of the throngs, Blossom disappeared...

* * *

At first, Warren was determined to drop his work and search for her. Then that night, an old man came to him. The man had bright, sparkling eyes, for all his grey hair and stiff legs. He came into the circle of fire light, because Warren was alone there. The others were at work inside the tractor. The old man was not frightened of him.

"I bring word from the girl" he told Warren. "You are not to follow her. She is safe. She sends her pro-

mise to call you when you are needed." Warren leaned forward and spoke harshly.

"How can I believe you?"

The old man seated himself near the fire. He was a queer little gnome, with three legs and rounded, stumpless shoulders.

"She is safe with her own kind at the middle west caves," he said. "I dare not stay here long. The others hate to see the Originals among us. I hate no one. I will die soon, and will not have to think of my own horrible shape when I look upon them. That is why I came. She said to tell you the message is from the Blossom. You will understand that, she said."

Warren arose. He knew that the old man told the truth. Her name was not known to anyone else.

"Thank you," he said simply. "If there is anything I can do?"

The old man shook his head.

"You will be wise to leave here, before it is too late," he said. "You cannot teach us anything that will help us. I said that I am too old to hate. I hate no one. That isn't true of all of us."

Before Warren could question him, the old man was gone into the shadows.

For a long time, the blond man stood before the fire, staring into the flames, then he shrugged and turned away, knowing he could do nothing for the present. He owed Cragg and Stanton a debt. He couldn't leave them. Now that the battle was so near and their need for him so great. Stanton was going north tomorrow, to bring back necessary materials. Cragg and he were starting the first town. It would be a city of one story houses constructed of rough boards, and containing bunks. The cave people were

already at work in the forests with their first crude tools, designed by Stanton himself.

* * *

Three months after the morning Stanton came back from the cavern, the first city was completed. It had been planned to hug the bank of a wide river. Below the village, trenches drained into the river, taking away the refuse. Here a fence had been built to keep the people from using the water. On the upper end of the town, more trenches had been dug. Fresh water came from the stream into the town itself, giving them drinking water and places to wash their new clothing.

Logs came from the wooded slopes and were cut into timbers. Houses went up, with neat roofs and well planned bunks and chairs. The cave people worked hard, coming out into the sun to enjoy a life they had long since forgotten.

As Roger Warren made long trips into the forests, he ran across the six-legged deer, the legless fox, and many other strange animals left by the curse of the Power.

The atomic wars were forgotten as such. Now, the terrific force was referred to as the Power. That one word meant more horror than any other meaning that could be placed upon what had happened.

Gradually the three men learned to accept what they saw, and work with the poor people who came to them. Roger Warren ceased to worry each day about Blossom. Instead, he had in his mind, a lasting image of her sweet face, and in all his work, he thought of her as a person who would need him some day, and who would call him when the time came.

AND FINALLY Warren received another message from the Blossom. An old, old woman came to the rough laboratory he had constructed and said that the Blossom was safe and thinking of him each hour. That was all.

* * *

Three more towns were built in the next half year. They arose on the banks of three California streams. They were separated by fifty miles of desert land. The land was warm, and the fruits that Stanton brought under cultivation flourished again and furnished a varied diet for the people. James Cragg picked three sites for his schools, one in each town. He put the finest books in each school and spent his time evenly between teaching the three. Thus, knowledge again started to grow and fill the people with curiosity toward the past and the future.

That year passed quickly. At the end of each three month period, one of the three men went on the lonely trip north. It was impossible for anyone to follow them, for the tractor moved more swiftly than man could run, and the winds covered their snow tracks before they had gone a mile.

The cavern remained their secret. Each time the tractor came back, it brought greater secrets of education and science. New conceptions of life came to the people who had been almost destroyed by the Power. The first crude blast furnaces were built and tools were made. Bricks were made and the houses took on new form and durability. Cragg told them of the past, and put into their minds the history of the skyscrapers and the farms.

The three cities of the western divide were growing swiftly.

For a reason that Warren could not

fathom at first, people of the three cities were gradually dividing themselves into certain types. Those who were deformed so far as legs were concerned, gravitated toward the south and gradually that settlement became the home of the Many Legs.

By the same token, those whose arms were deformed, or those who had no arms at all, stayed in the first settlement. The center city seemed to attract those who had other body deformities.

* * *

Then catastrophe struck. Warren came home from one of the gradually decreasing trips north. He met Phillip Stanton at the large laboratory they had constructed in the first settlement. Stanton was waiting for him when he parked the tractor under the shed and went in. The man looked years older. His hair had turned snow white. His hands were trembling.

"I'm glad you're back, Rog," he said quietly. "We've found some very grave trouble I'm afraid."

There had been no warning of this when Warren left. Everything was peaceful. The people showed every sign of being content. Warren discarded his clothing and stood for a time under the shower they had prepared. Then, while he dressed, Stanton found himself able to tell what had happened. It wasn't a pretty story.

"Six days ago," he said, "Cragg came home from the south settlement. He did some teaching down there and was coming in for some advance books. Just a few miles from here, he ran across the bloody bodies of a half dozen people of this settlement. They had been cut open and crucified in the worst possible manner."

Roger Warren said little until he had dressed. He knew what this meant, but he hated to admit it, even to Stanton or himself.

"Phillip," he said, "I wonder if human nature will ever change? Deep down inside, the same hates exist. Each group has learned to hate the other. First they all turned on the Originals, but the Originals were too small a minority to cause them any trouble. Now the Many-Legs hate the Many-Arm people. It's one stacked against the other, with all the freaks of the central village ready to take hell from both."

Stanton nodded.

"I don't know what we can do," he admitted. "Just keep on trying, I guess. We knew there was hatred for the Originals. The Originals are isolated and forbidden to mate. If they are doomed, then by the same token, you and Cragg and I will die sooner or later, at the hands of the very people we're striving to save."

Roger Warren was glad that Stanton saw it that way. It would help, if Stanton didn't cling too much to his ideals.

"We might try some form of punishment," he said. "Can Cragg tell who committed the murders?"

Stanton saw a group of Many-Legs traveling south before he found those corpses. He doesn't have any idea how to identify them."

Warren nodded.

"Maybe it's just as well. In the old days I never found an example where it helped to take blood for blood. Usually, it makes the condition many times worse."

James Cragg had no intention of giving up. In his heart, there was love for his fellow men. Conditions, however, grew steadily worse. Somehow the Many-Arms of the first settlement found out who had murdered their brothers. They sought revenge, and there was a bloody duel in the southern settlement. Many people died, but it did no good. The wars were already

growing to fearsome proportions.

WARREN LAUNCHED all of his energy into Cragg's teaching. He tried to explain to restless people that war was folly and that the very thing that had once broken them, was on the rampage again. He got only sly smiles of distrust.

It was Stanton who finally admitted that their days were numbered unless something happened to restore harmony. Then Roger Warren received his third and last message from the Blossom.

The old woman came into the laboratory and sat down on the floor in a corner. Her face was without nose or eyes. Skin stretched across the holes where the nose and eyes had once been. Her skin was pocked with ugly marks. Her arms were gone. Her shoulders had a queer, fateful twist in them.

"I should not have come here," she said in a low voice. "I have been told not to carry messages to you. The Blossom needs you at once. You are to go. She is in danger."

Warren asked no questions. He let the old woman go quietly out into the night. He explained the purpose of his trip to both Cragg and Stanton, and because these two knew how important the girl was to him, they gave their permission for him to leave at once.

That night, the tractor roared out of the settlement and rushed headlong into the hills. Curious, shining eyes watched it go.

* * *

Ten hours later, the old woman was found in the street outside the laboratory, her throat slashed from ear to ear. Stanton buried the body himself. After the job was done, he retired to the laboratory and prayed. He had the fearful idea that his prayers would

not be answered.

* * *

Roger Warren climbed out of the tractor and stretched his legs. The fuel tank was empty. He found the supply carton and put a new pellet into the tank. He stood on the crest of a low hill, looking down through the dusk into the valley where the Originals were living.

It had been a long journey. He had followed the crude maps Stanton had prepared, and he blessed Stanton for remembering well the roads to Denver.

There were only a few guards here, for the Originals had no wish to escape. He left the tractor hidden in a forest. He walked through the dry, pine scented woods. He saw the tiny fires lighted near the entrance of the caves a short distance away.

For the first time Warren saw an Original man. The man was about thirty, well proportioned and intelligent looking. He wore only the usual tanned skin about his waist, and was unafraid as Warren went toward him. They faced each other in the twilight, and Warren knew that news of him had come ahead.

"I am Warren," he said, and smiled. "I come from the three cities."

The man smiled, showing even rows of teeth. There was neither warmth nor irony in the smile.

"We've been curious about you. We've been forbidden to leave here but we're glad you got the others to leave us. It's very peaceful now."

That was all. The man turned and moved back toward the caves. Warren followed him.

"I came to see the Blossom," Warren said.

The man did not answer or look around. He shrugged.

"You'll tell them that I must see the Blossom at once?"

The man whirled on him. His voice was devoid of all friendship, yet there was no hatred in it. It was as though Warren was of no importance. Suddenly it was clear. This man was an Original. The Originals were doomed. They had no hope or destiny. They were interested in nothing. The world moved about them in a meaningless pattern. All save for one. Blossom had a purpose. She was waiting for him. Wasn't that a good enough reason for them to hate her?

She came out of the group that waited by the caves. She walked to his side hesitantly and put her hand in his.

"I knew you would come," she said.

Warren looked at the men and women in front of him. They were like a small, unyielding wall. A wall of doomed flesh. They had no courage. A half dozen Many-Arms were standing about. They had no weapons. They were the guards.

Suddenly Warren was disgusted. Here were fifty normal appearing men and women, and in his own group there were only three. Three men had dared try to change a whole civilization of people, and these fifty didn't have the courage to even mingle or find happiness among themselves.

With the Blossom's hand in his, he pushed toward them.

"Take me to your cave," he said grimly.

They parted and let him through. None of them made a sound.

SHE STOOD in the faint light of the burning coals, as lovely as she had been that first day. She was not like them. She had real courage and understanding. She...

"I've been very lonely," she said. "Many times I would have called for you. I gave you time to see that your

work would never be successful."

"I know," he said.

"You have not lost everything," she said, and pressed her slim body into his arms.

After they had kissed, she pushed him gently away.

"I did not want you to leave the others. They are in danger. The people will strike soon. They will destroy themselves because they are jealous. They will destroy you if you are not careful."

"We were doing good," he said.

"We were trying to help."

She shook her head. All the knowledge of hate and love seemed locked in her brain.

"Each type hates the other," she said. "Each wishes to survive—alone. They hate each other, because from each other's standards, the others are horrible to look upon."

"I'm—not sure," he said slowly. "Maybe there is still time. Perhaps we can teach."

She shook her head.

"We must leave tonight for the first settlement," she said. "We may be in time to save your friends. I don't know."

"You wanted me to succeed, didn't you?" he asked gently.

There were tears in her eyes.

"So much that I was willing to be away from you until I was sure you couldn't," she said. "And now, we must hurry."

* * *

Phillip Stanton was worried about Cragg. Jim Cragg had been in the city of Many-Legs for a week. If Stanton had dared leave the laboratory, he would follow Cragg's footsteps south. He didn't dare. It had started the day Roger Warren left the first settlement. First a fire had broken out in the south end of the settlement. Men had run with urns to the

river, but had failed to quench the flames.

Many of them had tried to break into the laboratory, but Stanton had locked the heavy shutters and they had not been able to enter. The first settlement was half destroyed. The people were on guard. This was war in its crudest, most horrible form. Man against men.

Stanton waited—and prayed. Prayed that Warren would come back in time. He knew that all their dreams were blasted. He had tried to build knowledge and love. He had succeeded in giving these people crude knives and the secret of fire. Two weapons of death. The tractor was their only escape now. Stanton was not afraid, but he wanted to live. If he lived, he might have another chance...

In the city of Many-Legs, one building only was burned to the ground. Its blackened timbers sprawled under the sun. The Many-Legs stood around it with wide eyed fascination. They had burned this school because they wanted to destroy what it stood for. They could not stand any memories of things that were beautiful or well formed. They destroyed something far more handsome than themselves, because they could never reach that physical perfection.

They looked on, not daring to enter the pile of still burning embers. They looked at the distorted, charred figure that was on its back, staring up at the sky with sightless eyes. This, then, was all that was left of Jim Cragg's school. This was Jim Cragg, teacher, and idealist, perished because he stood for something these people could not understand.

Roger Warren gunned the tractor and sped down across the hills toward the blazing settlement.

Cries of revenge drifted up across the sunlit hills. Stark, burning timbers still stood, marking what had once been his dream, and the dreams of others like him. His body was covered with sweat.

The girl huddled close to him in the cab of the metallic monster. Her hands were in her lap. Tears moistened her eyes.

"I'm afraid we're too late," she said.

A vast army of men were fighting in the fields before the settlement. He plowed through them as though they did not exist. His eyes were red and he saw through that haze of blood. He gunned the tank, sending it roaring down the streets toward the laboratory building.

In front of the laboratory, surrounded by burning building, he stopped and leaped out. He fought against the door until it broke open and he sprawled across the floor on all fours.

He was too late.

The windows had been forced open. Phillip Stanton lay on his stomach, a knife pushed through between his shoulder blades.

Roger Warren knelt beside the grey haired man and drew the knife out. He turned the man on his back and closed his staring eyes with shaking fingertips. Under the body, letters had been scrawled on the floor.

"Escape if you can, Roger, and wait for a better day. There may yet be another opportunity."

Warren could hear the flames crackling over head. The roof was ablaze. He ran to the laboratory shelves and found a small, uncorked bottle. He opened it and poured it carefully around Stanton's corpse. Then he went to the door, leaving a trail of the stuff all the way to the street. He jumped into the cab, and

without looking back, gunned the motors and sped north.

Behind him, the laboratory that had witnessed the rebirth of knowledge, felt the touch of flames. The liquid that Roger Warren had poured upon the floor, felt the heat of the flames and expanded suddenly under a mighty explosion. This was Phillip Stanton's cremation, and his body was forever saved from the fiendish knives of the people he had tried to save.

* * *

The long corridor was dark, save for the pale, greenish flow that came through the ice barrier which sealed the opening. The light bathed the ceiling, and shone on the long rows of pillars that supported it. Beyond the corridor, light could not penetrate. It would not touch there for a thousand years.

The man and the lovely girl, occupying two of the couches, were at rest. All the wires were in place. The feeder tubes were connected to their

arms. Their hands were entwined, fingers pressed tightly together in love and trust for each other.

They had fallen asleep this way, with words of love on each other's lips. The girl understood. She knew that they would awaken again, safely together, and with the hope that there would be another time when they might bring a message of peace and hope to those who would inhabit the earth.

There was no movement. The silence was complete. Sometime, the motors would spring to life. The lenses that watched over them, would awaken and bathe their bodies with the heat of life.

It would take many years. Perhaps the world would never produce a race that could profit by learning. But the two faces were calm, and there was something on them that might give these two a better opportunity to succeed. There were two smiles of love...

THE END

Penetrating Arrows



By PETER BLOOP



TODAY IN our modern methods of warfare we have long forgotten the importance of the bow and arrow. Archery has been relegated to a position of historic discussion and hobby practice as a whole, although it is still used as a means of hunting sport by experts in the art.

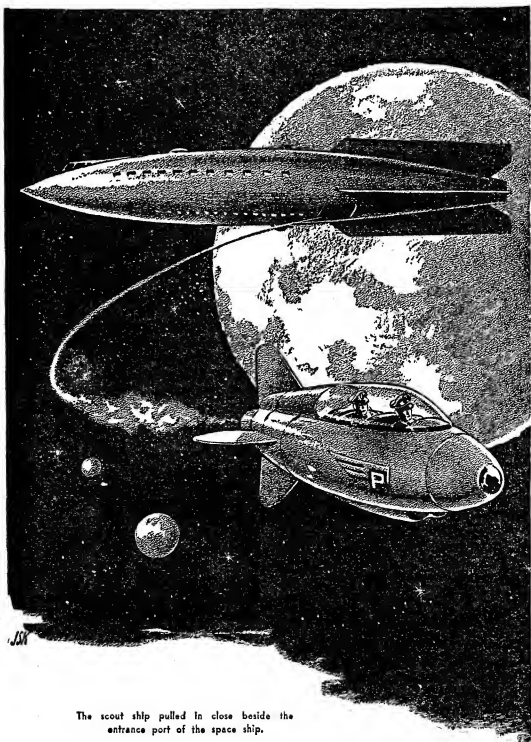
And along these lines, the power of the driven arrow is something that has been both overrated and underrated at the same time. In the 18th century Moseley quoted Lord Bacon as saying that the Turkish bow was capable of shooting an arrow with such force that the head would penetrate a steel target or a piece of brass two inches thick. On the other hand, there are too many people who rate the bow and arrow as merely child's toys, and to be treated as such.

The facts of the matter are that a mod-

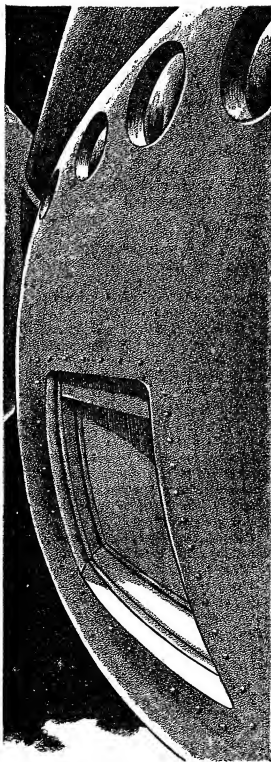
ern hunting arrow will upon striking a large animal, pass completely through it, unless a bone stops it. This is readily understood when we consider the fact that the arrow's kinetic energy is 50 foot-pounds. This type of arrow, if the head is well sharpened, will readily penetrate a thousand sheets of paper. This is comparable to penetrating a standard telephone directory of any large city! The same arrow, with a blunt, flat, steel head, will readily penetrate a solid inch of pine board.

These facts should be enough to show that the arrow is not only a toy, but a weapon of great striking power, possibly not as great a power as Lord Bacon is alleged to have attributed to it, but nevertheless enough to make us keep a modern 65lb. hunting bow locked up in the closet—away from inexperienced hands!

THE END



The scout ship pulled in close beside the entrance port of the space ship.



DECOY in SPACE

By
DAVID C. McGOWAN

When space travel becomes a reality, it's a cinch there will be lawless goings-on in the void—such as pirates; and the police will step in to establish order.

CAPTAIN Leland Crane adjusted his cap to the correct angle, flicked an imaginary spot of dust from his silver-grey System Police uniform. Correctly military, he stepped into the office of Commander John Belson.

"Captain Crane reporting."

The grizzled man behind the desk, veteran of the old rockets, waved his hand casually.

"Sit down, Lee. For the moment the formalities are off."

He finished shuffling through some papers on his desk.

"I wanted to extend your leave, boy—" he said apologetically, "you've deserved it, but something else has come up." He offered Lee a cigarette. "Do you have any idea why I've called you on such short notice?"

Lee settled his gangling six feet of bulk a little more comfortably in the strictly functional chair and took a deep drag on his cigarette. He grinned.

"It wouldn't have anything to do

with the disappearance of the cargo of three freighters these last two months, would it? Judging from the way the tele-papers have been screaming, I'd say that that was on your mind."

"Right, Lee, right. The *Glorious*, the *Sirius II*, and the *Golden Flame*—all three looted before our very eyes, so to speak. Let me give you the story first, although you've read the tele-paper versions. Then maybe you can give me some ideas."

"I'm listening, Commander Belson," Lee said soberly, "I know the thing is pretty serious."

"Well," Belson, began, and the furrows of worry deepened in his face as he talked, "when the first ship—a little job carrying both passengers and freight on the Martian run—was halted, we weren't too alarmed. Space piracy is nothing new—you know that, and we were sure we'd catch the operators. Incidentally they did get a very valuable cargo—radioactives for fuel preparation. All they did was to halt the *Glorious*, take off its cargo—one panicky passenger was killed by the boarders.

"The System Police didn't get a single trace on them, even though we suspect they're holing up somewhere in the Asteroid Belt. While the matter was never closed, we soft-pedaled it. Then came the next two! Now the authorities are screaming for us to do something. So far we haven't gotten a single lead. On consideration we've learned a few things.

"The first thing: how do they locate the ships? We don't send them on a definite run and they're under radio-pulse silence. That's the first peculiar fact about these piracies. Secondly, they aren't beamed with locator pulses either; not until they're right on the craft do they open the radio silence. And we've checked the

passenger lists thoroughly. There have been no people against whom the slightest suspicion could be directed. That's the story, Lee. See any loop holes?"

"Frankly, Commander, no. About all you can do is provide escorts for space-craft now."

Commander Belson laughed: "I wish I could. But you know how impossible that would be. We don't have even enough patrol craft much less enough ships to provide a convoy system. We've got to locate these pirates—that's for certain." He jabbed a finger in Lee's direction.

"That's where you come in. We're planting you aboard the *Vega*, a vessel of the passenger-freighter type—it's loaded with radioactives and medical supplies for the Martian settlements—and if nothing else you'll be able to get some sort of line on the pirates. The boarders they've sent out have been regular space men, from their behavior. If we could get just one photo of some of the pirates we might be able to track them down. I've got a dozen patrol craft searching the Asteroid volume—but you know how practical that is. I might as well search all space!"

Commander Belson handed Lee an envelope containing his papers.

"Here're your credentials," he said, "showing you to be a silver merchant. In your baggage will be our most powerful pulse transmitter. If something special comes up, immediately contact our monitor. Perhaps in the act of piracy you can do that—but don't get yourself killed."

"You act as if you know the ship'll be taken. What makes you so sure?"

"I'm not sure, son, but I'll be surprised if it isn't." Belson said wearily. "As I said, the passengers all seem to be clear. We can't figure it out and we're expecting you to dig

out the answer. Get going, boy, we want results." Commander Belson stood up and extended his hand. Lee took it. The leather-faced space man wrung it warmly.

"Good luck," he said simply. Lee stepped back at attention and saluted. Commander Belson returned it.

AS HE wandered back to the billet, Lee's mind probed the facts, elementary as they were and tried to dig some sense from them. But there wasn't enough to go on. He wondered if they had thoroughly checked the passengers as Belson had said. Everything pointed to some sort of advance warning. That was one phase of the thing that Lee was going to delve into.

The System Police were thorough. When Lee returned to his quarters, he found sufficient credits, credentials, identification, and bank drafts to make him undoubtedly what he was now supposed to be. He checked into a hotel in the vicinity of the space port like any innocuous business man awaiting a flight. Previously he had discarded his uniform and assumed conventional dress, the comfortable trousers and jacket that were the standard clothing of people everywhere. Soon he looked like what he was supposed to be, a prosperous small businessman, though to the more than casual observer, the rigid set of his broad shoulders and the military lilt to his walk might have appeared suspicious.

He booked passage on the *Vega* which was scheduled to make the Martian run the following day. From then on, according to orders, he made no contact with the base, with his men, with Commander Belson, or with the System Police at all.

He had a copy of the passenger

list, a small group of twenty people; he studied their dossiers which accompanied the list. They showed nothing of significance. The passengers had been thoroughly cleared by the System Police.

Lee spent the rest of the day in preparing his luggage, the main item of which was the pulse transmitter. It was encased in a small suitcase, its power supply consisting of a small atomic generator and a group of large-charge capacitors, each holding a vast amount of energy, running into the thousands of kilowatt-hours. The transmitter itself was an extremely small, single-tube oscillator of the micro-wave type. It had been keyed and set-up. It would do either of two things. When set to "radiate", it would deliver for a few millionths of a second a terrific burst of radiation in a set pattern. This brief and powerful burst of energy would be capable of being intercepted even back on Earth. When set to the conventional "transmit", it would act as an ordinary voice-transmitter good for ranges of a few million miles when detected by sensitive receivers. Space stations and patrol craft could easily be contacted by Lee with this instrument. Primarily however, he expected to use it when attacked merely to give out the warning that the attack was taking place. Commander Belson had made it clear that in previous attacks, the ships had been under a radiation blanket and had emitted no warning or state of their condition. The pulse transmitter should give the System Police adequate time to do something about the marauder. And above all, because its pulse was so brief, it would not at the same time as it warned the System Police, give warning to the pirates. Checking it thoroughly Lee had

to admit that it was a fine piece of design.

THE NEXT day he presented his ticket and credentials to the embarking officer and was escorted with the other passengers to the *Vega*. As they rode out to the vessel, Lee had a good chance to survey his companions. He found little to interest him. Most were businessmen, a few with their wives. Their were two school-teachers going into deep space for the first time.

Lee's pulse quickened though at the sight of one of the passengers. He recognized her instantly from dossier he had read on her, but he had not expected to see a "student" so beautiful. She was young, with a slim, shapely figure, and her long black hair gleamed in the sunlight. He was tempted to talk with her, but there was something about her aloof manner and absorbed introspective carriage that deterred him. He promised himself that later he would make her acquaintance, System Police business or no System Police business. She was too interesting to let go.

The *Vega* was no novelty to Lee. He had seen her type a thousand times before. She was short, a stubby cylinder designed to hold a maximum amount of cargo. Her passenger facilities consisted of simple cabins, while a portion of the control cabin had been allotted as an observation deck. She was typical of her type, seen all throughout the System, a work-horse, efficient, and unglamorous. Her manifest showed radioactives and medical supplies.

Some of the passengers went to their cabins, others remained on the observation deck. The ship was scheduled to take off in an hour.

Lee selected a comfortable chair on

the observation deck. He was unknown to the captain and he had no intention of making his identity known until the occasion arose for it. He looked for the girl but she had evidently returned to her cabin.

How different things were now, Lee mused. A mere eight years ago, before the atomic drive had been perfected, old-fashioned rockets powered spaceships. All the attendant discomforts of acceleration swings, high and low accelerations, were gone now. It was as easy as traveling in a 'copter. Yes, Lee thought, times have changed. Until this "pirate" affair, I would have bet deep space was safer than home.

He felt the whine of the rotors beneath him as the craft prepared for take-off and with no perceptible change the *Vega* was starting through the atmosphere. Lee had to laugh at the child-like enthusiasm of the school-teachers—but his laughter was tempered with envy.

The first part of the five-day trip proved uneventful. It was like any trip. After the first interest had worn off and the first impressiveness of deep-space had left its mark and vanished, the inevitable boredom set in.

Lee studied the passenger list again. Claire Raymond, it said, age 21, occupation, student, purpose, trip-vacationing. The private dossier said little more. Her father was a businessman, at present on the Moon, conducting his affairs.

Lee grinned to himself when he thought of how much attention he was devoting to her. This was hardly what Commander Belson had sent him on the trip for. But Lee was young too. Some things transcended even business.

Claire Raymond never appeared on the observation deck as did the other

passengers. She remained confined to her cabin having her meals delivered there by the steward. Therefore, Lee thought, I'll have to engage in some sort of stratagem to contact her. It shouldn't be too difficult.

HE WATCHED the steward deliver a meal. As soon as the steward left the cabin, Lee could hear the lock click. She certainly was an isolationist. He knocked on the door. He heard her moving around rapidly as if she were tidying up. Then the lock clicked again and the door opened a few inches. Her lovely face appeared in the crack. Lee smiled.

"I hope you'll forgive me," he said, "but we're passing through the Asteroid Belt, and I thought perhaps you'd like to see something. That is, if you'd care to." He felt like a fool, but she was worth becoming acquainted with.

She looked at him coldly. Her face appeared to be under tension. There was no answering smile. Nor did she open the door and invite him in.

"I'm sorry," she said coolly, "but I wouldn't care to. I can see adequately through my port. Thank you very much." She started to close the door.

Lee grinned disarmingly. "Just a minute," he begged, "the truth is, I'd like very much to know you—won't you—"

"Please stop annoying me," she said frostily and closed the door in his face.

"Whew! Lee whistled. He turned away and shrugged his shoulders. "She isn't very sociable, that's for sure," he said half-aloud. Oh well, he mused philosophically, it was worth a try anyway. He walked away. What was of such interest in her cabin? What occupied her so? He dismissed the thoughts from his mind, and wandered back up to his cabin, a short dis-

tance away.

Lee opened the luggage piece containing the compact pulse transmitter. He switched it on to check its operating state. The gauges showed the instrument to be working perfectly. He got up and walked toward the quartzite port and looked out into the star-studded blackness of space. Suddenly he jumped.

Only a short distance away was a long black hull visible because of its blotting out of the stars that formed its background. It was as slim and sinister looking as any patrol craft, but Lee knew automatically that this ship had never been built in System Police yards. This must be the pirate!

Without an instant's hesitation he tore the pulse transmitter from the chair and brought its antenna to the port. He pressed the key and sent the warning pulses hurling into space. For three minutes the incredibly powerful little transmitter dashed out its warning.

Casually Lee glanced at the built-in oscilloscope-tube. Across its face appeared a double trace! Not only was his instrument pulsing its warning but some other gadget within a very short distance was also hurling out a powerful burst of radiation!

Lee dropped the pulse-emitter. He had a strong suspicion of what was happening! He dashed from his room, ran down the narrow corridor toward Claire Raymond's room. Lee looked at the door. There was no point in being diplomatic.

He stepped back a few feet and hurled his powerful bulk against the thin but strong plastic partition. The sturdy door did not give but the flimsy lock tore from its holdings and Lee burst into the girl's room. He almost fell on the floor, but when he recovered himself he saw the frightened girl standing near her port, holding

in her hands a transmitter almost identical to his own, only smaller!

WHEN HE broke through the door, she dropped the instrument and faced him. Lee couldn't decide what emotions were going through her, except that fear seemed to predominate over anger. He went up to her. She started to bend down to pick up the transmitter. Lee's foot snaked out and soundly kicked the delicate machine into a corner of the cabin. Suddenly the girl was on him. She started to pummel him on the chest. Her face twisted in anger:

"You—you—" she breathed, rage in her eyes.

Lee seized both her hands firmly and prevented her from struggling.

"I should have known there was something peculiar about you," he said. "Do you realize what you've done? Believe me, sister, the System Police are going to make it hot for you. You cheap little traitor!"

For an answer she tore one hand free and slapped him in the face. For an instant Lee was tempted to knock her out, but he recovered his poise. He gripped her hands tightly, holding them behind her back.

"All right, baby," he said, the loathing and contempt in his voice falling on her like a lash, "get moving. We're going up to the watch deck. It's too late to do anything about your friends out there, but the patrol will get them later. Now move!"

Suddenly she seemed resigned to her fate. Slowly she walked ahead of him, but Lee took no chances, still retaining his grip on her hands. This wildcat might pull a gun or a knife on him! But the fight seemed to have gone out of her. She was sobbing now and when he looked at her face, its lines were softened in sorrow,

"You'd better cry," he said unsympathetically, "because you'll have a lot more to bawl about when the System Police get through with you."

She said nothing and as they went up to the observation all he could feel was the convulsive shuddering of her body as she continued to sob.

In a few minutes they were on the observation deck. At the entrance, Lee paused and realized he had made a mistake. There were three space-suited figures standing there. They were fully armed though they had drawn no weapons.

"Come in!" It was a flat command given by one of the suited figures as he spotted Lee and the girl hesitating on the threshold. Lee stepped in, releasing the girl's hands.

The leader of the hooded men, a tall swaggering figure obviously familiar with command, gestured to them to fall in line with the rest of the control room's occupants, against the wall. Lee and the girl obeyed.

The pirate was speaking every now and then into his radiophone mounted in his suit, urging his men to shake up the unloading, to get some speed on. Through the quartzite windows, Lee could see the slim raiding craft paralleling the *Vega's* course while small shuttle boats transferred cargo from one vessel to the other. It was done with almost military efficiency. Lee got a better look at the marauder. From its sides protruded a few cylinders which he recognized as close-range artillery pieces, while occasional open ports showed torpedo-launching tubes from which remote controlled rockets could be launched. This was a full-scale war craft all right, he thought, and it would give any single System Police ship a real fight. Such armament was strictly forbidden any craft other than System

Police ships. Lee wondered if the System Police would get here in time.

SUDDENLY the Vega's loudspeaker crackled. "Captain Stern—our screens are picking up System Police—heading this way! Somebody has warned them!"

"Damn!" The leader of the three men in the control room said, "How?—" His eyes swung around the room and fell on the girl. Lee saw her eyes go wide and she started to shake her head. An idea came to Lee. It was apparent that the pirates were going to get away anyway.

"Yes," he burst out, "she warned the System Police. She—"

The pirate switched to him: "Who are you?—Never mind!" He turned to his henchmen. "Take them both aboard. We'll find out about this." Helplessly, the men of the Vega watched the two "passengers" escorted toward the airlocks.

Under the pirates' armed presence, Lee and the girl were hustled into a life boat which shot from the air lock immediately. Lee could see that the operation was being stopped at once. Evidently his warning had gotten through and System Police were on their way—with speed, he hoped.

Lee watched the girl closely. Her tears had dried and her face was calm, calm with the appearance of disinterest, almost as if she was sleep-walking. For an accomplice, she seemed to be behaving peculiarly. There was something wrong all the way around, Lee thought. Undoubtedly this girl had operated the pulse transmitter that enabled the pirates to locate the Vega, but exactly what motivated her? She didn't behave certainly as one would expect of a hardened member of the gang.

Lee dropped her from his mind for

the moment. He observed the way the pirates were organizing to leave as their life-boat approached the side of the pirate craft. It was painted a dead jet-black without any insignia other than a little lettering on the bow which read "Saber". The pirates worked with astounding efficiency. There was no lost motion. Everyone moved exactly as would the crew of a trained warship. This pirate was disciplined. The name Lee had heard called over the Vega's loudspeaker system meant nothing—*Captain Stern*—that could be anyone.

In a few short minutes everything and everyone was aboard the *Saber*. The interior of the ship was neat and clean Lee noticed as he and Claire Raymond were led to a cubicle cell, a cabin much like the ones on the ship they had just left. No one said anything to them as they were put in this room. The pirate crew members were indistinguishable from any ordinary space-sailors. They could have been the crewman aboard any System ship. English was spoken here as it was everywhere in the System.

The girl stared stony-faced and unfeeling at one wall. Lee looked at her. She was lovely. He could feel the same mysterious lift to his senses when he looked at her now as when he had first looked at her.

But his conscious mind warned him that here was no ordinary girl. This woman had betrayed the Vega into the hands of the pirates. God only knew if she had had another hand in the capturing of the previously pirated merchant vessels. He watched her closely, his desire and admiration of her beauty walled off by the deep-seated contempt he felt for her principles.

His reverie was interrupted by humming of the generators as they changed pitch. Now instead of riding

with and paralleling the course of the *Vega*, the *Saber* was darting off on a course of her own. Lee wondered where the operating base was. It must be large to permit the pirates to use such a fine ship as this. The servicing of such a vessel alone would require an elaborate layout of shops. Undoubtedly, he concluded, the hang-out—a poor word indeed to describe what must be a large base—must be somewhere among the asteroids.

LEE TURNED to the girl!

"You may as well call your Captain Stern," he said sneeringly, "the play-acting's over."

She remained silent.

"What's the matter?" he taunted. "Why aren't your boyfriends playing fair? Are they taking out their failure to loot the *Verga* completely, on you?"

Claire Raymond looked at him finally. She seemed about to burst into tears again and Lee wanted to tear out his tongue for a moment.

"You're a fool," she said. "You don't know what you're talking about."

"I'm not blind," Lee answered. "I broke in on you and your pulse transmitter, remember?"

She seemed to wither inside.

"Yes," she said in a small voice, "I warned them. I gave them a radio beam."

Lee stepped close to her and seized her by the shoulders, firmly but not roughly.

"Why?" he asked.

Suddenly she leaned against him and began to sob violently. Go ahead, baby, Lee thought to himself, and make it good this time. Think up a good story, one that'll really fool me.

In spite of his cynicism, he felt his arms tighten around her automatically, and the fragrant scent of her hair was in his nostrils. He held her

for five minutes while she sobbed and cried against him, apparently a weak woman. Lee knew better though, and he determined to probe the truth by pretending to listen to her line. Finally he said:

"Go ahead and talk if you want. Maybe you've got some explanation—but it better be good."

The girl looked up at him and Lee saw such candor and honesty in her eyes that for a moment he was ready to believe anything she told him.

Claire Raymond dried her eyes and stepped back.

"You know my name?" she inquired.

"Yes," Lee answered, "I know that—and a few other things. Such as—"

"If you're going to listen—listen or—"

"All right," Lee said, "I'm listening."

As she talked, Lee listened, fascinated, and mentally struggling with his innate desire to believe her reasonable story, yet withholding judgment, remembering what had brought him into this situation.

She was, she said, Claire Raymond, daughter of Olaf Raymond, a very successful small industrialist. A month ago her father had disappeared from his office and the same evening she was visited by a man representing the pirates. She was told exactly what she must do to insure her father's safety. First, she must not contact the System Police. Secondly she must assure everyone of her father working on the Moon. Then she must do exactly as directed. For several days she was trained into what her role must be. Passage was booked for her on the *Vega*. When her duty had been performed she was assured that her father would be delivered to her uninjured and the incident would be closed. She followed instructions to

the letter. Then in the midst of her singalling on the *Vega*, Lee had burst in on her—and here she was.

Her story was told with such simplicity and such naivete that Lee was inclined to believe her. He questioned her closely and everything she said seemed to fit perfectly. Lee remained silent after she had told her story. It was obvious that that was exactly how the pirates had operated with the other vessel which had been looted. Each time they had planted an agent like Claire who had sent out the warnings. Then undoubtedly the parents or whoever had been used as a hostage had been returned to the agent and the matter was closed. The unwitting agents dared not report to the System Police for fear of further retaliation. It was ingenious all right! But maybe the pirates had bitten off more, this time, than they could chew.

Glancing through the port, Lee knew that the pirate vessel would never be caught—at least, this time. They had gotten away too hurriedly.

Finally Lee turned to the girl.

"I believe you, Claire," he said, "but I warn you—don't try to betray me again."

BEFORE she could answer, the door opened and they were confronted by a man. He was obviously the same leader who had been called Captain Stern. He was tall, well-built, dressed very conventionally, and armed with a small pistol which he wore around his waist. In back of him were several pirates. He planted his arms akimbo, and surveyed his two prisoners.

Lee saw that Claire was looking at Captain Stern with mixed fascination and loathing—much as one watches a snake.

"You did your part, Claire Ray-

mond," the pirate said, "but not well enough. You should have been aware of this System agent." He gestured toward Lee. Then he stepped forward and slapped the girl across the face in a purely malicious blow. Lee's muscles tensed and he hurled himself forward. The pirate stepped back and Lee found the muzzle of a blaster pressing into his stomach. The pirate grinned.

"Why so gallant, Captain Leland Crane?" he asked. "We took a quick look at your cabin and found the transmitter. It was a clever stunt—but not clever enough. You've spoiled our little system, but we'll work out a better one. We'll find work for the two of you—don't worry about that. Or maybe you'd rather die?"

"Where is my father?" Claire Raymond asked, the imprint of the pirate's hand still clear red on her pale face.

"Unfortunately," Captain Stern said, "he was very uncooperative. He died of injuries sustained at the hands of his keepers. Too bad. Oh well, the whole scheme seems to have struck a snag—I suggest you take it philosophically."

Claire Raymond said nothing. Her face grew whiter. She covered her eyes with her hands and turned away.

Lee surveyed the situation. There was no chance of jumping the three pirates. He would be cut down before he could move. If he could only get to the radio room. Undoubtedly in the vicinity there must be a half-dozen System patrol craft, all combing the region for sight of the pirate ship, yet unable to find it in the vast volume of space. All they needed was a few radio pulses to trace. Lee would have sold his right arm for even a small transmitter.

Captain Stern and the two pirates left them then. Lee knew that un-

doubtedly when they landed, they'd be butchered. He was surprised he hadn't already been cut down.

Lee looked at the tearful girl. "Don't worry," he said, "they'll be brought to justice. The System Police will get them."

"That won't bring back my father," Claire said in a muffled tones.

"Don't think about it now. Help me. You heard this Stern. He knows who I am. Neither of us stands a chance. We'll both be murdered as soon as they reach their base, and believe me, they must be making a bee-line for it right now. If somehow we can get out of here, if we can get near a transmitter—That's what we've got to do. And the pirates are without a doubt on tight-beam communication with their base. Maybe a System ship can intercept that beam and get a line on them."

He searched his pockets. "Have you got anything of metal on you?"

The only thing they unearthed that would serve as any kind of a tool was a mechanical pencil. He went over to the door. There was no sound outside. Guards were hardly necessary. Lee wished that this was a plastic door like the one on the *Vega*.

Part of Lee's training as a member of the System Police had made him familiar with lock construction, but it was no easy matter working on this one. By dismantling the mechanical pencil, he was able to make a narrow tool that would slide into the lock opening.

Ten minutes of tedious work with the device served to indicate to him that the task would be worthwhile. Shortly thereafter he could feel the tumblers give within it. He turned to Claire.

"That's it. All we have to do now, is turn the knob and step through."

"WHAT ABOUT guards or men in the corridor?" Claire whispered.

"We'll have to take that chance. I hate to suggest this, but if neccessary, it might be a good idea to separate so that one of us stands a chance of making the radio room or the control room where we can get at some of the transmitting devices. We won't do it, though, unless we have to. These people are probably desperate. They know that the System Police are flocking to this general region by the hundreds. Right now I'll bet they're frantically preparing their base for an alert. But it won't do them any good. We've got enough heavy stuff to blast them out of space-time."

Gingerly, with Claire following close behind him, Lee opened the door.

He peered into the narrow passageway. There was no sight of anyone. He stepped into it, trying to decide which way to go.

Followed by Claire, he turned to the left. They passed several closed doors. Judging from what Lee had seen of this vessel and from what he knew of System Police ships, the two were quite similar. He could expect to find the control and transmitter rooms in approximately the same places.

The corridor made an abrupt right-angle bend. Lee peered around it. Not thirty feet away was the entrance to the control room. He could see two men seated with their backs to him. They were intently watching their screens and the instruments. Lee could make out another door just to the right of the entryway to the control room. This was labeled, "Radiation Room." That was the place to get. Sneaking along the corridor so as to make no noise, Lee and Claire made the doorway without any trou-

ble. The men in the control room, one of whom Lee recognized as Stern, did not turn around.

Lee placed his lips against Claire's ear.

"There'll be a scuffle," he said softly. "I'll have to cut down the radio-man."

Abruptly he flung open the door. In front of him, a man was hunched over a bunch of dials and keys and microphones. He heard the door open and he turned around. His mouth opened to shout, but before a sound could issue from it, Lee's hands were around his windpipe. He thrashed and struggled, but Lee only gripped tighter until he felt the body go limp beneath him. Claire had closed the door. Disregarding the unconscious man, Lee flung himself into the control seat, and with the skill born of long experience, he had the transmitters boiling out the standard System emergency call. Any signal at all, even an undamped or damped radio wave-train would serve to locate this pirate craft. Even now, as the radiation boiled out into space, Lee knew that a hundred craft were making a bee-line for this spot as their direction finders clicked out figures.

Setting the three separate transmitters on their different frequencies Lee put them on *automatic transmit*; then he turned to Claire.

"We haven't been caught yet," he whispered, "but it's only a matter of time. Let's make a run for a life boat."

Nodding, Claire followed him again.

They stepped out into the corridor and retraced their steps.

Stern and his companion were still hunched over the board. Lee and Claire sneaked back, without any difficulty, to the same place from which they had started. They con-

tinued on in the opposite direction to the one they had originally taken. In a matter of seconds they saw the huge red-painted sign that always indicated the presence of the life-boats.

Lee whipped open the dogs that locked the door. They stepped into the small room containing the little ten-foot football that made up a typical lifeboat. While Claire secured the entrance doorway through which they had just come, Lee busied himself opening the door to the spaceboat. The red light indicating operativeness was on. He and Claire stepped into the lifeboat.

LEE TOOK charge of the controls. He pressed a button. The side of the pirate cruiser opened automatically and the air whished out into space, the sudden expansion through the initial door-crack leaving a white trail of hoar-frost that quickly vanished.

"We're going to stay very close to this baby," he said to Claire. "If we do the pirates will never be able to bring anything to bear on us. If we try to get away, they'll spot us and cut us down with a torpedo or a shell."

Suiting the action to the word, Lee very carefully manipulated the controls that sent the spaceboat slithering out of its mother ship like a baby turtle leaving its parent. Gingerly, the spaceboat, under his skillful hands, slithered out of its womb, a few feet distant from the pirate cruiser. Then Lee brought it up and around so that its course paralleled that of the mother ship. In that ingenious way, the pirate craft could not injure its baby without injuring itself. Any weapon it carried would blast the spaceboat to smithereens, but in the process it would tear a

gaping hole in the pirate vessel.

Lee couldn't help laughing at the simplicity of the whole thing and the ease with which it had worked. The spaceboat was now a few feet away from the pirate vessel and riding with it like a bird on the back of a rhino. The pirates had discovered them by now, for Lee could see the exit port closing, the port through which the spaceboat had issued.

Simple gravitational attraction aided by the use of a slight magnetic field, all coupled with the inertial velocity of the mother ship kept the space boat firmly attached to its parent vessel.

Lee avoid any area with ports, for the pirates could seal off such a section, open the port and use a small shell-projector or rocket. Because both Lee and Claire were not wearing space-suits, loss of their air would not make the space boat untenable, but it would be impossible to dodge for very long any sustained volume of small-arms fire capable of penetrating the craft.

Claire had taken over the radio transmitter of the life-boat and was sending out a ragged signal, which Lee knew was impossible for the pirates to blanket for the simple reason that any signal at all was a give-away.

Peering carefully through a small electronic magnifier scope, Lee searched the surrounding volume of space. He could already begin to detect the flaring fields that denoted on-coming System ships. The pirates' jig would soon be up.

Suddenly Claire tapped him on the shoulder and the sight that greeted his eyes caused his new-found enthusiasm to vanish.

"Look," Claire said, "out that port."

A half-dozen men were issuing from the side of the *Saber*. Even now

Lee could clearly see that they were led by the commanding figure of the pirate chief, Stern. They carried rifles and other small arms. If anything, they were determined that Lee and Claire were going to die, even as certainly as they knew they were caught.

Even as their air vanished in a frozen vaporous puff through an opening created by a rifle fired by one of the pirates, Lee's hands were sending the life boat scuttling like a crab toward the men clinging to the pirate hull.

In seconds two of them were ground against the hull of the *Saber*, as Lee brought the life boat crushingly against them. Scooting over the surface of the hull, the life boat quickly sent the remaining pirates scurrying for the protection of their air locks. It would be quite a while before they ventured out again.

THE SPACE boat was too mean a weapon to combat. It was impossible, too, for the pirates to hurl the little craft from them. Regardless of any maneuvers they might perform, the life boat would cling to their vessel with the tenacity of a leech, possessing every bit of velocity it possessed and bound to it by magnetic threads of force-fields.

Lee and Claire were exultant. The System Police already were within range, and the pirate vessel was beginning to lob torpedoes and shells at them. Fortunately the craft were distant enough easily to avoid such projectiles. They did not fire in return.

Their transmitters were in communication with Lee and Claire.

"They're blanketing you with intense radiation, Captain Crane," the headphones said against Lee's ears, "so you can't answer us. You'll be in-

terested to know that we've gotten a line on their base and the cruisers are tackling it already. Hold fast to a given position. We'll try a little accurate fire. Don't fling away from the *Saber*; they'll pick you off too easy."

"They don't need to tell us that, eh, Claire?" Lee grinned.

Claire was busy scanning the surface of the *Saber*.

"I'm afraid, Lee," she said, and Lee Lee thrilled at her use of his first name, "that they're going to get us somehow—they won't give up so easy."

The *Saber* was firing rapidly now—torpedoes, shells—anything that her armament possessed. But the replies from the System craft were extremely accurate. Claire and Lee watched a monstrous gaping hole appear in the side of the pirate vessel as a System torpedo struck. Shell-fire left a series of ghastly holes all along the badly battered *Saber*.

So absorbed were they in the progress of the uneven battle that until it happened neither knew how desperate Captain Stern was.

At the instant that Lee turned by pure chance, he saw the airlock door swing open—its lock torched out. The suited figure of Stern stepped through. Before he could even bring

up and fire the pistol he carried, Lee was on him; his arm flashed down knocking the weapon from the pirate's hand, and then the two of them were a tangle of arms and legs as they sought to tear each other to pieces. It was hard for either to injure the other protected as they were by the tough fabricoid space suits.

Lee sought desperately for some way to tear Stern's suit. Holding Lee down firmly against the floor of the spaceboat, Stern's eyes searched for a tool or weapon. Suddenly Lee felt Stern's suit go limp—the air puffed out—and he looked. Claire stood a few feet away, staring horrified and yet fascinated at the discharged pistol in her hand.

"Thanks, Claire," Lee said simply, "almost got it that time."

The loudspeaker in Lee's helmet crackled. "We're going to board you now—we've cut up the *Saber* enough. We'll have a boat pick off the two of you."

Lee looked at Claire. "We'll have a lot to talk over when we get out of these things—am I right?" There seemed to be a promise in the girl's eyes. "Yes," she answered, "I think we will, Lee."

THE END

THE PYRAMID AND IRON

by A. Morris



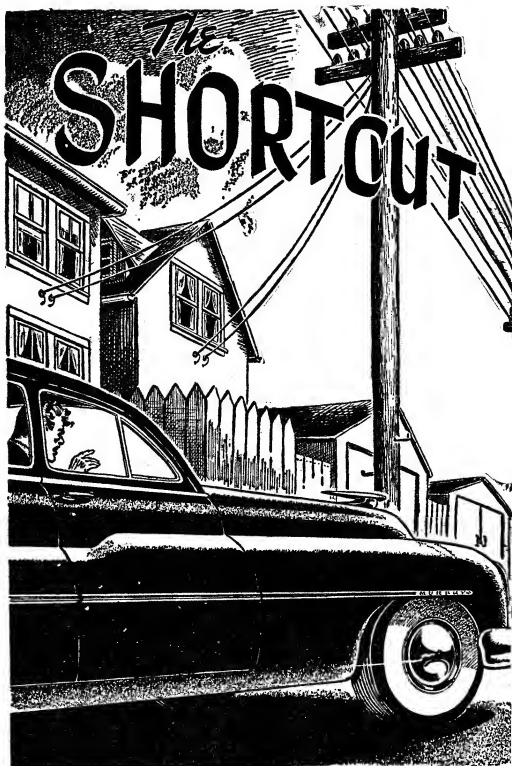
THE PYRAMIDS of Egypt have long been the subject of much intense scientific study. In the great pyramid at Gizeh we have been able to trace Egyptian history back many centuries.

But one of the most interesting facts concerning the great pyramid of Khufu is that it has helped give us a better understanding of where and when iron originated.

There have been many schools of thought on the subject of the origin of iron. The French scientist, Jacques de Morgan was in favor of the theory of oriental origin.

Then there is the legendary home of iron on North-east Asia Minor, where the Chalybes in the sixth century B. C. were said to have had a monopoly on the metal. But finally, we have the evidence at hand in the great pyramid of Khufu at Gizeh.

Here it has been discovered that iron tools were existent in Egypt as far back as 3100 B. C. in the 4th dynasty. We have authenticated this fact almost beyond question. Which means that the Egyptians were in possession of the metal at an astounding early date. It is just one more secret the great pyramid has divulged.



The alley led through strange twists and turns in which two worlds seemed to merge

By ROG PHILLIPS

When you have to get somewhere in a hurry, the thing to do is to take a shortcut. Arthur took one — but went through more than space!

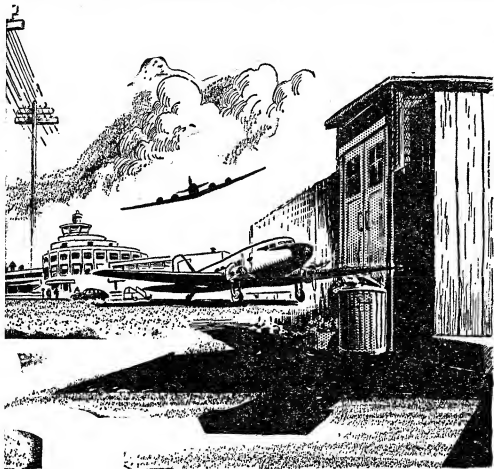
"LOOK OUT for that safety island, Arthus. Careful. I think that car isn't going to stop for the stop sign. Watch out! Don't jerk your brakes hard, Arthus. Don't pass that car. There's a streetcar coming behind."

"Yes, dear " Arthur sighed quietly to himself so his wife wouldn't notice it and take it as a sign of revolt.

"Watch out for that dog, Arthus. Arthur! You fool! You almost hit

that dog! Why can't you learn to drive? Pass that car—no. No! wait a minute, there's that streetcar behind us again. Now pass! No! All right. Now pass. Why didn't you pass? We might not get another chance for blocks."

"Sorry, May," Arthur muttered. His spiritless eyes came to rest on a tall, fairly well dressed man standing out from the curb a half block ahead, his thumb elevated in the universal



signal for a ride.

A dim spark crept into Arthur's eyes. The hitch hiker was only twenty feet away now. He pressed his foot firmly on the brakes. The car came to a quick stop. The hitch hiker needed no more invitation. The door opened and he slipped into the front seat beside Arthur while May gasped her indignation wordlessly from the back seat. The car was in motion again instantly.

"Thanks," the stranger said.

Arthur nodded. His eyes studiously avoided the rear view mirror and its reflection of his wife's outraged glare. His fingers twirled the steering wheel, turning the car into Harlem Avenue headed south.

He had picked up the stranger for the very simple reason that he knew his wife would shut up while someone else was in the car. He had to make it to the airport in half an hour if May was to catch her plane. Her back seat driving distracted him.

It wasn't only her back seat driving. She was that way in everything. Even when he washed the dishes after supper she hovered at his back warning him to be careful, inspecting each dish to see that it was clean, and keeping up a running line of chatter that had the effect of freezing his own powers of judgment.

The hitch hiker was silent for several minutes, his calm blue eyes studying Arthur and May. He noticed the lines of frustration on Arthur's face, the domineering set to May's face.

"How far you going?" he finally asked.

"To the airport," Arthur said. "Have to make it in less than half an hour. The way traffic is, I doubt if I can do it."

"I doubt if you can," the stranger said thoughtfully. He was silent, apparently considering something.

When he spoke again it was a continuation of his former words. "The *regular* way."

"What do you mean, the *regular* way?" Arthur asked.

"I mean, down Harlem Avenue," the stranger replied. "There's a shortcut you could take."

"Shortcut?" Arthur echoed. "Harlem Avenue is straight and goes right to the airport. What can be shorter than that?"

"This shortcut is," the stranger persisted. "From here, you can make it to the airport in about five minutes on the shortcut."

"**N**ONSENSE," Arthur was skeptical. "It's nearly fifteen miles from here in a straight line!"

"Wanta bet?" the stranger asked, a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"If we can get there in five minutes, I'll take you wherever you want to go—after my wife catches her plane."

"It's a deal," the stranger agreed. "If I can't get you there in less than five minutes, I'll pay your wife's plane fare."

"O.K. Now, where's this shortcut?"

"Just do as I tell you," the stranger said. "Turn right at the next corner."

Arthur did as he was told, turning right and driving for three or four blocks before the stranger gave other directions. Those directions involved two U turns—or was it more than two? In the end, Arthur was directed to turn his car down a deserted alley. As he came out at the other end of that alley, he found himself on Harlem Avenue, just a block from the drive-in to the airport.

He looked at his watch. The total time had been just a little over four minutes. There was a dazed look on his face as he slid the car into an empty parking spot, climbed out hastily and loaded himself down with May's

luggage.

"Now, you be sure and be here for me next Wednesday at three o'clock promptly," May began as they walked toward the air terminal alone, the stranger still sitting in the front seat of the car. "And don't you spend any money while I'm gone. There's plenty to eat at home if you aren't too lazy to fix it. I want every cent of your pay check accounted for when I get back. Be careful when you wash the dishes. Don't break any..."

The stranger was still sitting in the car when Arthur returned. Arthur looked at him sharply. His eyes returned the stare with a light of silent laughter in them.

"Now, then," Arthur said as he backed the car out into the driving lane, "I want you to explain how it's possible to go fifteen miles in four minutes at a speed of about twenty miles an hour by a lot of hokus pokus U turns and confusing directions."

"But they weren't confusing," the stranger objected. "It really was the shortest way to the airport, only no one seems to have figured it out except me."

"YOU SEE," the stranger expanded. "Distances and directions are just the ones your ancestors got by wandering here and there and forming paths. The first man followed a certain path, and everyone after him went the same way he did. Nobody ever tried to find a shorter way. Roads were built where paths had been. Even airplanes follow the old paths instead of taking the shortest route to where they want to go."

"I see," Arthur said dryly, feeling that the stranger was mocking him in some way. "Well, I promised I would take you wherever you wanted to go, and I will. Where do you want to go?"

"Oh, there's no hurry about my getting there," the stranger said evasively. "I'd like to have a bite to eat first, anyway. Would you like to join me? On me, of course."

"Why, yes," Arthur was somewhat flattered at his invitation, but without knowing why he felt so.

"Good." The stranger's eyes speculated a moment. "If you'd let me get behind the wheel," he suggested.

"I'm perfectly capable of following your directions," Arthur said somewhat testily.

"You're quite right," the stranger placated him. "And now that I come to think of it, the only way you'll learn any of the shortcuts, is to drive yourself."

Arthur tried his best to remember the directions he was following. His eyes also picked out and memorized landmarks to assist him later when he would try it alone.

Again, the devious path ended with turning into a deserted alley. And again, when Arthur drove the car out the other end of the alley, they had arrived.

They were now in a busy street. Automobiles whizzed by rapidly, seeming intent on keeping Arthur's car from ever getting out into the street.

And all the cars had California license plates!

Across the street was a ten thousand dollar building with a fifty thousand dollar neon sign in front of it. There were long parallel glass tubes with notes dotted here and there. The notes seemed to be like those one sees on a piece of sheet music, but they spelled out the words, "Melody Lane."

Arthur managed to steal into the curb lane of traffic and park the car. The stranger climbed out. Arthur followed him meekly. At the corner,

they crossed in the pedestrian lane. The street sign said Cahuenga Blvd.!

The giant clock in the face of a marble front building said ten after one. Arthur looked at his watch. His watch said ten after three! Ten minutes ago he had been at the airport in Chicago. Now—now they were in Hollywood!

"What a shortcut!" Arthur murmured.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing," Arthur grunted, dodging a car that went through against the lights. He was engaging in a little mental arithmetic.

FROM CHICAGO to Hollywood was somewhere around three thousand miles. Maybe not that much, but certainly over two thousand! It had only taken eight or nine minutes to go that distance, and the car hadn't gone over forty miles an hour!

Not only that, they'd gone the whole distance without leaving city streets and alleys! What about all the farms and mountains in between?

He dodged another car and jumped to the curb just behind the stranger. They started along the sidewalk toward Melody Lane.

"Say!" Arthur asked firmly. "How could we come all the way from Chicago to Hollywood without leaving city streets?"

"That's simple," the stranger said, not pausing in his stride. "You see, that's another one of those things that people have got all wrong. They think Chicago and Los Angeles are two different cities. They get in their cars and drive and drive for days at a time—and come right back where they started, into the city. It looks different, they traveled over two thousand miles, there's a lot of new faces in the Chamber of Commerce,

so they take it for granted it's a different city."

"Nuts," Arthur said bravely. With May not around, he was beginning to be himself. "I think you just brought me here to show off. There's lots of good places to eat in Chicago."

"Oh, no," the stranger said innocently. "I eat here quite often. Sometimes I walk here; but then, from the loop in Chicago to here, it's a little closer than it is from the airport."

"Oh," Arthur said, feeling frustrated.

They sat down at a table near some indoor palm trees, symbols of the waiters' guild in Hollywood. A beautiful young thing in a petite red uniform came over, decided Arthur must be a director or someone else too high up to have to dress the part, and flashed him her screen-test smile.

Training made him drop his eyes instantly to the table cloth. Then he remembered May wasn't along and lifted them, smiling timidly.

The stranger seemed to know what he wanted and what Arthur wanted, too. "I'll order," he said. "I know what's good here."

WHEN THE waitress left, he pulled out a pack of cigarettes. He offered one to Arthur and lifted his eyebrows politely when Arthur declined. He lit one with an expensive lighter, and after taking a few deep puffs, placed it between his fingers to use as a baton to emphasize his remarks.

"You see," he began, "the whole American public is kept fooled by the higher-ups into thinking there are a lot of cities and towns, all filled with people. Actually, there's only one big city and one small town. And there aren't more than ten or twelve million people all told."

Arthur snorted.

"It's a fact," the stranger said mildly. "Try this sometime. Go to some small town and write your initials on the front of, say, a chain dress shop. Then hop in your car and drive to the next town as quick as you can. Go to the same dress shop in that town and look in the spot where you wrote your initials. They probably wouldn't have had time to erase them before you got there."

Arthur snorted again.

"How about the people?" he asked. "They won't be the same people."

"Oh, yes, they will," the stranger said quickly. "That's the key to the whole deception. You see, people are location conscious. Also, they are split personalities. One of your personalities believes it lives in Los Angeles. You yourself believe you live in Chicago. Actually, it's the same city and you and someone living in Los Angeles are the same man. That way, the census taker marks you down as two different people, when you're really only one."

"Very interesting," Arthur dared to sneer.

"I see you don't believe me," the stranger said with a tolerant chuckle. "But how do you explain our getting from the airport in Chicago to Hollywood in less than ten minutes?"

"How do you explain the people who drive west for several days to do the same thing?" Arthur countered.

"That's simple, as I told you," the stranger replied. "They really just drive in a big circle and wind up where they started, but they believe they are in a different city. It's the same way with airplanes. They follow the routes laid out on maps, and also the markers set out along the way."

"How about the surveyors that laid out the roads and markers?" Arthur asked disdainfully, yet uncomfortably conscious of the fact that he *had*

made it from Chicago to Hollywood along some "shortcut" in less than ten minutes.

"Oh, them!" the stranger shrugged, turning his attention to the delicious roast duck the waitress set before him.

Arthur watched him in exasperated silence as he started in on his own roast duck dinner. His mind revolved over the mad things that had been said, trying to find a logical explanation.

ONE THOUGHT rose above all others, terrible in its potentialities. He had promised the stranger he would take him wherever it was he wanted to go and the stranger had wanted to have a bite to eat before they started. To get that bite to eat, they had "taken a shortcut," but they had gone somewhere around three thousand miles for it. And that meant—what?

The stranger was maybe crazy, but not crazy enough to want to go three thousand miles for something to eat before taking a short trip across the street! No indeed! Where he wanted to go was more likely twenty thousand miles.

That would be all right if he had a shortcut that would get them there in fifteen minutes. They would get there easy. But then the stranger would get out of the car and he would be alone.

How would he get back home? He knew he wouldn't be able to follow the directions. Why, right now, if the stranger walked away from him, he wouldn't be able to get back to Chicago in time to meet May at the airport on her return trip!

Three thousand miles he'd have to go without the shortcut. It was upsetting. He declined the dessert and spent the rest of the time chewing

at his lower lip worriedly.

The stranger, his face calm and relaxed, his eyes absently watching what went on around him, seemed almost to have forgotten Arthur.

Only when he had finished his second cup of coffee and his dish of ice cream, and was ready to depart, did he look at his companion.

"Shall we go?" he asked politely. To Arthur, it had the sound of ominousness. He regretted his rash promise to take the stranger where ever it was he wanted to go; but how was he to have known?

Back at the car, he climbed behind the wheel and waited while the stranger opened the door on the other side and settled himself comfortably, sighing with contentment.

"Well?" Arthur rattled. He cleared his throat and tried again. "Well?"

"Well what?" the stranger asked.

"Where do we go?" Arthur asked timidly.

"Oh," the stranger said, as if the thought of going somewhere had been farthest from his mind. "Let's see, now. I think we'd better go back where we were and start from there. That way it'll be simpler for you to find your way back home."

"I doubt it," Arthur groaned. "I couldn't even find my way back from here, and we just came here."

THE STRANGER gave him a shrewd glance. "I can see you're regretting your promise," he said. "Don't tell me that if we went back to the airport in Chicago now you'd renege?"

"Of course not," Arthur said hastily. "But how was I to even dream your shortcuts went all over the country. While we're on the subject, just exactly where is this place you were going when I picked you up?"

"Oh," the stranger shrugged. "Just

a twenty minute drive from here—if we started from here."

"Twenty minutes," Arthur groaned. His Adam's apple jumped spasmodically. "J-j-just what's the name of this place where you're...going?"

"It's in Chicago, not too far from where you first saw me," the stranger replied.

"Oh," Arthur said relieved.

"You see," the stranger went on, "I really went out of my way and wasted a lot of time to help you out."

"Let's go then," Arthur said with new spirit. "It'll be more than glad to take you anyplace—in Chicago."

"Just a minute," the stranger said. The shouts of a newshawk were coming from the sidewalk. The stranger stuck his head out the car window. "Over here!"

The headlines were in two inch red block letters. They said NORTH-EAST AIRLINES PLANE CRASHES. Arthur's eyes frantically skimmed the account. It had been the plane his wife was on, and one sentence stood out. All on board had been killed!

"My wife!" he choked. "My wife! That was her plane."

"Yes," the stranger said mildly. "I suppose she was killed." He watched the play of expression on Arthur's face. Hope, incredulous unbelief, and joy, mixed with self accusation and guilt for these spontaneous feelings, and an ineffectual attempt to look shocked and griefstricken. "Don't take it so hard," he added with a concealed smile.

"It's quite a shock to me," Arthur said.

"I suppose it is," the stranger agreed. "But I'm late now. Suppose we get going. You had accident insurance on her?"

Arthur nodded as he stepped on the starter and slipped the car in gear.

The stranger laid the paper on the seat between them and began giving Arthur directions for the shortcut back to Chicago.

Again, there were two U turns and several bewildering right and left turns, ending with turning into a deserted alley.

A GAIN, WHEN they emerged at the end, traffic was heavy. It took a couple of minutes for a break so that Arthur could get into the street. He turned to the right and drove in silence. The street marker at the next corner said that it was Harlem Avenue.

"You know," the hitch hiker broke the silence, "one thing I've found about life that carried me through everything."

"What's that?" Arthur asked absently.

"Fatalism," he said solemnly. "Things happen the way they do, no matter what. If a thing's going to happen it's going to, and there's no getting out of it. All we can do is recognize it and take advantage of it the best we can."

"I suppose that has something to do with shortcuts?" Arthur prompted.

"In a way," the stranger hesitated. "The shortcuts are always there if you know about them. If you don't, it's a human failing always to take the longest way around and think it's the shortest way. But there are shortcuts in time as well as space."

"In time?" Arthur echoed.

"Yes," he said. "People think it's twenty-four hours from now until this time tomorrow, so to them it is. But if they knew a shortcut, it might only be ten minutes."

He sat up and looked through the windshield.

"You can let me off at the next corner," he continued, "People think

the past is gone forever, too; but if they could find the shortcuts, they could even go back to yesterday. It's all a matter of knowing the shortcuts, both in time and in space. When you know them, you don't have to stay in the cow trails and paths worn in time and space by our unthinking ancestors, and followed by the vast herd because there doesn't seem to be any shorter path."

Arthur slowed to a stop at the curb.

"You can't change things, mind you," the stranger said as he opened the door. "If you went back to yesterday, for example, you'd be you, and do exactly the things you did then, within certain limits. You might not even know you had gone back, but just think the same thoughts you did then, and never suspect."

He climbed out and, keeping one hand on the door, looked in at Arthur with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"Thanks for the lift," he said. "And remember, you can't change things, but you can take advantage of them when you know the shortcuts. The airport's just a few blocks ahead now."

"WELL!" The sound of May's voice from the back seat caused the hair on Arthur's scalp to crawl. He nearly ran into a safety island before he got a grip on himself. "Of all the dumb idiots, We're late to the airport and you have to stop and pick up a hitch hiker who talks a leg off of you. Watch out for that safety island, Arthur. I do believe you picked him up just to shut me up."

"Now, May," Arthur remonstrated, his thoughts in a whirl. "You know that isn't so."

"Look out for that car ahead," May screamed. "He isn't going to stop for the stop light."

The car in question stopped abruptly.

"He didn't look like he would," May relaxed. "Be careful. That woman crossing the street doesn't see you. Don't pull out! There's a street-car behind you. Slow down!"

"Yes, dear," Arthur murmured. His thoughts were repeating things the stranger had said—or had he? "Short-cuts in time as well as space..." But of course it was all a day dream. If it had really happened, May would have already taken the plane and the plane would have crashed, killing her.

But she was here! She hadn't taken the plane yet! That meant that if she didn't, she wouldn't be killed. But of course it was only a day dream. Still...the stranger's voice came back, "And, remember, you can't change things, but you can take advantage of them..."

Take advantage of them. Like making May miss that plane that was going to crash and kill all on board. But if he caused her to miss it, she would be worse than ever to live with, impossible as that seemed. Worse than ever...

But it had all been just a day dream. A shortcut that would take you from the Chicago airport to Hollywood in ten minutes! Arthur chuckled mirthlessly.

His eyes glanced down at the seat beside him. There was a slightly rumpled newspaper laying there. His chuckle stopped short. Keeping one eye on the road, he reached down and straightened the paper out.

Those red headlines stared up at him. **NORTHEAST AIRLINES PLANE CRASHES!** It was a Los Angeles paper!

"Slow down, Arthur," May's voice came at him. "Here's where you turn in. Signal, Arthur! There's a car right behind you. Signal!"

"...take advantage of them..." the stranger's voice whispered. "You can even go back to yesterday..."

Arthur pulled the car into a parking space and shut off the motor.

"Hurry, Arthur," May said anxiously. "I'll miss my plane. Grab my bags. HURRY."

A RTHUR re-read the two inches of small type under the headline. All on board were killed, but it was too early to have the names of the passengers listed yet.

"Hurry!" May had turned around and was glaring at him.

He guiltily dragged her two travel bags out of the back and struggled along in her wake. There was a half scared look on his face, and a light of growing decision in his pale eyes.

"Yes, May," he said.

He followed her into the depot, across the waiting room to the check-in desk. May had elbowed ahead of the others and was demanding attention. He slid her bags under the counter onto the weighing-in platform.

The young lady in the uniform of the Northeast Airlines finished checking on May's ticket. Arthur cleared his throat guiltily.

"Be sure and get some insurance, May," he said timidly.

"Insurance across the waiting room at the desk to the right of the door," the young lady directed. "But hurry. The plane is almost ready to leave."

"Let's skip the insurance, Arthur," May objected. "I can't miss the plane."

"Nonsense!" Arthur said with a show of spirit. "Insurance is important."

Again, May's elbows gained them immediate service. While she was signing the blank, Arthur hastily read it.

"Only five thousand?" he objected. "Give us five of those. Twenty-five thousand is better protection."

"Sorry," the new young lady said mildly. "Five thousand is the limit."

"The limit?" Arthur echoed. "I'll call my insurance broker and get some more accident insurance."

"Later," May murmured tenderly, "I really do believe you love me."

She bent over and kissed him briefly, then turned to hasten through the door to the waiting plane.

"May!" Arthur's voice was filled with misery and hesitation.

"What is it, Arthur?" She paused.

"Nothing," he said. "Have a good trip."

He turned back to the young lady at the insurance desk. "Where did you say the phone booths were?" he asked.

FIFTEEN minutes later, he backed his car out of the parking space, a satisfied expression on his face. He had been able to talk his insurance broker into a fifty thousand dollar accident insurance on May for twenty-four hours starting at once, with the ten dollar premium to be mailed in before the day was over. Fifty thousand dollars!

He had written out the check and mailed it right at the airport so as to be sure there would be no slipup.

He turned north on Harlem, humming to himself. Once he reached down and patted the Los Angeles paper affectionately. Ahead was the alley he had come out of on that first shortcut. He pursed his lips in amazement as he noticed that it was just half a block from the place the stranger had gotten out of the car the second time along.

Frowning in an effort to remember the details of the shortcut, he turned into the alley He had entered the

alley at the other end from the left. He was sure of that. He would go slow and try to remember landmarks. If he could only do it he would be in North Chicago in a few minutes.

Several blocks and as many turns later, the houses began to look different in some way. He couldn't remember any of them. He made a U turn and tried to retrace his path to a point where it was familiar again.

The surroundings grew stranger than ever. Arthur no longer cared about getting to North Chicago by a shortcut. All he wanted to do was get back onto Harlem Avenue. But where was it?

He stopped to read a street sign in quaint, old English letters. As nearly as he could make it out, it said Higsby Avenue and—and HARLEM! But the Harlem here was a narrow, cobblestone lane!

Arthur had been the whole length of Harlem. He was positive that it didn't look like this anyplace. It was deserted, too. Not a car in sight and not even one person.

"There must a Harlem Place," he thought. "And this is it." The thought relieved him. He made another U turn, backing twice to make it in the narrow intersection.

He headed back along Higsby, deciding to keep going until he saw something familiar.

After several blocks, he saw something that seemed familiar ahead of him. He speeded up. As he drew nearer, he recognized it as the buildings of an airport.

BUT WHAT an airport! The terminal building was several times larger than that at the Chicago airport. A plane was coming in for a landing as he parked his car. It, at least, looked familiar. In large red script, the name NORTHEAST AIR-

LINES was blazoned on it.

Arthur climbed out and went to the doors entering the waiting room. He had decided to keep his mouth shut and buy a paper and find out where this place was.

He pushed through the doors into a vast waiting room. It was too deserted for a busy air terminal. The only human being in the place was a man in a bright red uniform, sitting behind a long counter. Above the counter in large letters was a sign saying, "Check in here before leaving the airport."

At the far end of the waiting room was a similar sign which said. "Immigrant Station buses through these doors."

His eyes turned back to the man behind the counter. He seemed asleep.

At the far end of the counter were several doors. One of these now opened. A man in ordinary civilian clothes came through. His expression was dazed.

The uniformed man behind the counter came to life and stood up. Arthur approached slowly so as to be

able to see what went on better. Other people were now coming through the doors. They were evidently the passengers from the plane that had been about to land when he came in. There were men and women.

Arthur was quite close to the counter now. There was something strange about the man behind it. He couldn't quite make out what it was, but there was something strange about him.

Arthur approached the counter until he was only a few feet from the now busy official. Suddenly he knew what was so strange about that man.

"Arthur!"

Arthur jerked around to the direction of the voice that had called his name. May was descending on him with outstretched arms, a glad look on her face. He watched her with wide eyes, his face pale.

He jerked his eyes loose and turned them back to the official behind the counter, comprehension and horror dawning on his face. The official had horns. Short ones—but horns.

THE END

WEATHER PREDICTORS



By ALLEN ALDEN



IT IS A standard joke that the weatherman always predicts the wrong thing—that he always makes a mistake. But in all seriousness, long range weather prognostication is becoming an accomplished fact.

A great deal of research at the University of California has disclosed that an extremely close study of both the waves of the ocean and the nature of winds, can enable scientists to predict when and where remote storms will strike.

Recording apparatus is immersed in the ocean at various points and the water disturbances carefully recorded. A storm as far away as five thousand miles, will have some effect on the waves and in that way will telegraph its coming.

The combination of prediction of this type, along with radar investigation of storm fronts should make it possible for meteorologists to predict the existence of a storm anywhere on Earth. As is well known, weather stations in the Arctic regions can supply tremendous amounts of information on the state of the world's weather. The U. S. is alert to this fact and maintains such stations in the far north. Furthermore flights over the Pole, have as an objective, the gathering of this information.

"Call the weather station, dear. Find out if it will be seventy-two or seventy-three today!" Don't laugh, for it will reach that point.

THE END

U-BOAT MURDERER



By JEAN LESLIE



THE MAGAZINES and newspapers of the last year have been jammed with stories of the new submarine developments. The snorkel, that mechanical breathing tube which allows the sub to operate on Diesels while submerged, various automatic-seeking torpedoes and a host of other new technical developments, plus the fact that Russia is known to have a huge submarine fleet, have conspired to impress everyone with the danger of the submarine menace.

It is true that the sub, the U-boat, tremendously improved primarily by the Germans and brought out by them too late in the last war to be used effectively, has become an extremely deadly instrument of destruction. But the submarine doesn't have all the advantages on its side. The U. S. Navy has been at work on some anti-sub work of its own.

Our navy has come out with the announcement of a new type of patrol craft. It is smaller than a destroyer, but bigger

than a torpedo boat. And it is jammed to the gun wales with every conceivable type of sonar and radar gear known to the mind of man—plus some that isn't.

The submarine is going to have a rough time trying to dodge this baby. To begin with it's faster—much faster than any sub could hope to be. It carries a tremendous armament in the form of depth charges, under-water rockets, automatic three inch cannon, anti-aircraft guns of every variety and caliber.

And the tentative title given this devilish vessel fits it very well—it is called a "killer" or a "hunter" names aptly describing its characteristics. For that is just what it is designed to do, to go out and murder, to go and kill—submarines.

The life of a U-boat man at best is not a happy one. It looked for a while like he was getting some surcease from his dangerous form of living. But that's changing—now his life isn't worth a plugged nickel.

MOOD INDIGO



By JAMES MASON



PSYCHOLOGISTS and other medical men have been giving great attention to a fact which has long been known but which is just beginning to be recognized by the authorities. This fact, is that human beings seem to go through a periodic cycle of moods of happiness and depression.

It's common to hear a person say, "I don't feel very peppy today," or "I feel rather moody." We are not speaking here of hypochondriacs or imaginative ills. The normal average person goes through these periodic spells of moodiness and alternate joy.

The study of this subject partially comes from an examination of the employment records of large factories and businesses where absenteeism is closely watched. When the productivity of thousands of people was carefully gauged, and then the individual daily productivity measured, it was found that there were wide variations. When efforts were made to discover the cause usually the simple answer, "I don't know," or "I don't feel well," was given.

Once recognized the subject could be

studied. For reasons still obscure but obviously connected with a person's health, mental state and so on, this cyclical moodiness can be of importance. The feeling of well being, on the other hand can drive people to startling productivity—and for no apparent reason.

Psychologists have come to suspect that the old idea of people being obsessed by demons must have some of its roots in this variable moodiness which afflicts us all.

By control of this factor, life could be made much more happy for the majority of people, but no one yet pretends that it can be done. It does seem, however that education and training have something to do with it. Because persons of lesser educational attainments, seem better adjusted, they usually realize happier, more well-adjusted lives. The tensions of modern living seem to affect them less.

But since an attitude can be "built-in" to a person, there seems to be great hope for believing that the periodic moodiness that assails so many people, can be to a great extent eliminated.

THE END

Why the Sky Is Blue

By RUPPERT CARLIN

Sometimes we start out with the very best of intentions — and wind up by being the big, bad ogre ourselves. Like the day I died.

THE DAY I died, I did not care greatly. Nothing in life had ever been what my childhood had gloriously led me to expect.

I had lain on that hospital bed so long, immovable, that everyone else was quite as relieved as I was when at last I stopped feeling and breathing and being tired of it all. This was not in your civilization, but many million years ago.

The floating sensation surprised me, for I knew quite well I was dead. Up, up...

Then I heard vague mumbling noises, crunchings and sighings. I began to see, to hear, even to feel a perfumed breath of air upon—was it my face?

Something vivid and rich and young was all about me. Waving mists of whitish something, glowing with mother-of-pearl striations; tall, ambulant tree-forms moving far and aloof in disciplined, sentient rows. Glowing life-forms, eyeing me with apprehension and—incredulity?

A wavering, female shape was quite close. Long trembling fingers reaching to make quite sure of my nature. Great wide luminous eye-sockets, full of a strange glow, alien to anything in my life.

"From the solidific cosmos, below?" The voice caressed me, moved through me searching with its own strange flowing current of sentience like an extension of herself.

My own thinking answered hers

as the neighbor tines of a struck fork vibrate—without volition on my part.

"New—come, I see. It is strange that you drifted here. Some chance current must have brought you. Most of them die before they reach the haven of the embryo. Outside is unsupported ether, and they perish, often. Welcome, brother. I will help you adjust to the new conditions."

Still my thought moved as if by her will, saying it was good to be welcomed, accepting her. Asking, too: "What is this embryo?"

"Every life form has reproductive functions. You are a stranger to wisdom. In your world is little knowledge of the nature of the Mother of life, or her ways. This world is a kind of child of your world, in an embryonic state of density. Not yet material, nor yet even spatial, but rather an embo-somato-pleuric world-sphere arisen from the parent sphere into its own space-time. A sort of invagination of normal space in which the birth of the new world takes place—do you understand?"

She looked at me with mournful, disappointed eyes, as if bewailing the fate that sent her such a babe-in-the-woods to care for.

"We who live in this world are an embryonic biological organization of life forms, all new-formed from the Mother's long thoughts upon life. As the inferior etherical forces sublimate and concentrate upon our irrigid lines of physical force, we become



The floating sensation surprised me, for I knew quite well I was dead.

gradually more alive. Eventually we may even live!"

She gave to the word *live* such an infinite glory of expected ecstasy that in my worldly disillusion with the process of living I managed to hold back my answering dark despair. She might never have to suffer through such a dull unrewarding mess of days as had myself.

All the bright misty body of her quivered with an angel's bright happiness-to-come, and my own heart responded with a pleasant thump as though it were something more than a node of half-existent fog...

breathed, I moved my four limbs, I felt myself. This was very like life, yet subtly different, with all the faculties wrapped in a kind of pleasant softness, like swaddling clothes. A dreamy, ecstatic current of something I felt must be the Mother's blood flowed through me; and between *her* and myself was an unseen cord binding my will and my desire to her alone. Every slow beat of her vast distant heart pulsed thus all through me, and by degrees I became more and more conscious of the presence of this sleeping, distant creator, in whom we, this world and the alien unborn life within it, slept a half-sleep, waiting for the birth to come.

I moved toward the undulant half-seen beauty of the female who had welcomed me, a daughter of the Mother as I was now a son—and touched her lightly with my hands, to know her.

She evaded my hands, virginally. "There is a spring and a beginning. There is a fruiting time, later, but it is not yet. We are unborn."

She may have been unborn in her estimation, but I was a man with a lifetime behind me. Never had I seen such beauty, such vital appeal to the

senses—and she claimed that herself and the whole pulsing, swimming world about her was "*unborn*"! I could not accept it, I pursued her—she fled and fled, sometimes laughing, sometimes angry. But always keeping me at my distance.

Days, weeks, months—there was no way to know the passing of time. There was always a greater and greater awareness, a deeper, more insistent call of beauty—a growing thrill in every pulse of life that shimmered through all about and through my own body.

THEN, INTO my Eden came the serpent! My almost forgotten pessimism became again conviction—nothing can ever be so fine as one expects.

At first it was but a vague mist, different from the other drifting mists only in its direction and in the fact that it was not pleasant, but faintly repellant to the senses.

For a long period I pondered the difference of this blue, repellant, drifting *thing*. Slowly it thickened, clumping here and there, growing, feeding...

Then it struck me. Of all the many forms of life, variant and lavishly beautiful as they were—this new thing was *the only one that fed!*

At last I knew! The life that was being planned and grown in the womb of the titanic Mother—had been invaded by a spore of some carnivorous kind!

But I myself was an omnivorous species—yet now did not even think of feeding!

This thing fed and grew, and as it grew, the glory faded slowly from the garden of life about me.

It was some dread infectious destroyer, and the Mother's thought pulsed despairingly through us—

questing the trouble. Asking each and all of us for help to find the cause of the killing thing. I watched the thickening blue ropes of now almost material flesh, and pondered. Could I help this land that had adopted my drifting nothingness and given me new life?

Time, now a heavy weight, dragged on and on, and the invader was a bloated, mottled ugliness asprawl everywhere.

"Give me a weapon!" I asked the Mother, again and again.

But she had no weapon; she could only bring together and cause to flow through us the materials of life.

I attacked it with my hands. I tore its blubbery flesh to shreds—and everywhere I threw the shreds, they remained, growing, still alive, like seeds.

Then I desperately resloved—to eat, too. Into my long-unused mouth I crammed handfuls of the blue repellance, swallowing. Now I would either be absorbed by the hated invader's spawning flesh—or my own omnivorous earthly nature would absorb and digest the blue, spreading doom.

The taste was bitter, the sensation in my unused and suddenly over-filled interior was agonizing. The hateful blue color spread through my limbs, my hands were blue when I again attacked the vast mass of it, eating—eating.

The taste was less bitter, and new vigor began to pulse through me. With it came an insatiable desire for more—and yet more—of the delightful food! Why had I called it bitter? It was rich with life-juice, it was filled with needed sustenance. I ate—and my friendly, virginal lorelei of the embryo world stood aghast and watched me eating with her great eyes filled with horror.

But my new self did not care. I went on eating, saying no word to her, thinking no thought to answer her questioning thought. I knelt and ate and grew.

Time did not drag now, it sped along, and my reluctant lorelei became ever more reluctant and distant—and I did not care. I was too busy digesting, and getting ready for more eating.

SO, LITTLE children, that is why the sky is blue. It is me, waiting for you to come up and meet me. That embryo world in time became only a memory within my stomach—and now I fill the whole sky. "You cannot evade me. When you die, I will receive you with thanks and rejoicing. Ah-hah! That ugly blueness did not win the fight within my body—I did! And always, I settle lower and lower, and hunger becomes even greater. Soon, Mother Earth herself shall fill me.

THE END

BUGS FROM PERU

By JUNE LURIE

ALTHOUGH most of us feel that we already have way too many bugs in the United States, twenty-eight thousand Peruvian bugs recently arrived in New York City. The bugs were collected by Mr. John Pallister of the American Museum of Natural History. He went on a nine months' one man expedition into the jungles of Peru, armed with cyanide bottles, forceps, flashlight, and a butterfly net. He went into the huge dark limestone caves in search of rare bugs. He found many that scientists

had never seen before. He brought back huge, fierce beetles that were nearly a foot long, and cave-dweller spiders, and giant moths that are brilliantly colored and with wing spreads of more than ten inches. He also found a Peruvian lantern fly which terrorizes the natives. The lantern fly is seven inches long and has a head shaped like an alligator's. It glows in the dark, and the natives say that it kills people with just one bite, but Mr. Pallister has disproved their belief.



And the **ROCKETS** CAME

By CHARLES RECOUR

Harley Weston didn't have a care in the world when he went on his vacation — until the day he saw the rockets screaming in the skies



He sat with his back to the cabin, his gun resting against one leg while he held the cleaning rod. And then he stared in sudden horror at the sky. A huge mushroom of smoke was on the horizon — near Chicago!

HARLEY WESTON strode along at a fast pace over the thin blanket of freshly fallen snow, reached the door of the sprawling house and ducked his head to miss striking the door frame. He set his rifle against the wall in its customary rack. At the other side of the bar next to the fireplace, he poured himself a drink, tore off his heavy mackinaw and went back to sprawl his slim six feet of muscle on the comfortable couch.

He surveyed the fireplace through the bottom of his glass and he was pleased with what he saw. What a pleasant peaceful existence. For the last week now, even though the cabin was only forty miles northwest of Chicago, he'd had the illusion that he was "away from everything." It had been such a long time since he'd taken a vacation from an electronics laboratory that it took a while for him to accustom himself to the strangeness. But now he liked it fine.

Tramping through the woods, a little hunting, a bit of fishing—coming back to read and relax at night. It was refreshing. He no longer dreamt of synchronizing mechanisms in his sleep. He felt alive.

Idly he switched on the radio. The muted throb of a dance band came over the air and the husky, sensuous voice of a singer poured out her heart. Harley grinned. He could see her standing before a microphone, oozing synthetic sentiment by the bucket. But it was pleasant. He had to laugh at his lack of cynicism.

Abruptly the song faded. There were half a dozen clicks. Harley sat erect. Then the deep resonant tones of the announcer started to flood the room.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, under the command of the Secretary of Defense, we are interrupting all programs at this time, whatever their nature, to bring you a special message from the President of the United States. I shall read it to you.

"To the People Of the United States; This morning, at ten o'clock E.S.T. our Ambassador received his visa and was ordered to leave the U.S.S.R. within twenty-four hours. To all intents and purposes the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with our Government. We have received continual and special reports from our secret agents within the Union by short wave radio. We know now that a state of war exists between our countries, because less than twenty minutes ago, the Rocket Institute at Leningrad launched three hundred missiles which we are certain are war headed with atomic bombs.

"I beg of you to react to this situation with characteristic American courage and fortitude. Please remain at your jobs, by your homes, with

your friends. Fleeing the cities will be of no help. Our radar screens and interceptor missiles, with the aid of the government of the Dominion of Canada, will detect and cut down the vast majority of these attackers. Some missiles will penetrate our defense—that we know, but our men are determined that these shall be as few as possible.

"As of this instant the United States is declared to be under military law. Every citizen will regard himself as a soldier of this country and will prepare to obey any orders that are given him. Because of the extremely serious nature of the situation, and because communication of orders must be instantaneous, all citizens will regard the radio as their source of information.

"I ask you to put your faith in me. We are going to be hurt. This will not be an easy war, nor will it end hurriedly. It is necessary therefore to regiment every man and machine. Local authorities will handle such matters. After today, the Capitol of this country will no longer be in Washington. It will be secret, but it will at all times maintain radio contact with its people."

THE ANNOUNCER paused and there was the rustling of paper. Harley could hear the nervous breathing of the man. The voice spoke again, momentarily high-pitched before it resumed its deep baritone.

"The Secretary of Defense alerts all citizens to the danger of invasion. Undoubtedly Soviet carriers will attempt to land soldiers and fifth columnists. Any suspicious aircraft should be reported instantly to the local police or military authorities..."

The voice droned on giving orders

and discussing the situation. Harley shook his head. He got up, walked over to the bar and poured himself another drink. He downed it quickly, lit a cigarette and decided what to do. He had no family or relatives. All that bound him to Chicago was his job. He grinned cynically. Did a job mean anything now?"

He tried to keep calm but he could feel a rising pulse of excitement rushing through him. Here it was at last—that long talked of atomic war! In spite of his radio, in spite of the fact that Chicago was so near, he felt completely out of things.

He walked out on the little porch. Dusk was settling, but the brilliant moon just on the horizon promised a clear night. Everything looked so beautiful. The fresh snow, untrampled and clean, was like a soothing caress.

Harley looked toward the Southeast. A short distance away lay one of the world's most powerful industrial centers. Nothing had happened yet, but how long would it be before the first of the missiles came over—in that direction. He could detect the barest fringe of lighter horizon that indicated a great city lay there.

Back in the cozy living room of the cabin, the radio droned on. Harley cocked an ear.

"...and proximity-fused interceptor rockets have knocked out numerous Soviet rockets, from our defense stations on the Arctic Circle. It must be stressed however that some must have penetrated. We—"

Savagely, as if he could stop a war by the act, Harley switched off the blatting radio. He went out again into the cold night air on the back porch. He looked into the skies. They seemed so peaceful and quiet. Then he saw it!

A pale orange streak travelling with incredible rapidity was hurtling overhead. It was hard for the eye to follow. Even as he watched it, Harley knew what it was and where it was going as it apparently started to dip. Breathlessly he watched the southeast for two or three minutes. Then it came. A brilliant blinding flare of light rose into the sky. As quickly and as intensely as the light flared into being, it vanished. The first one, he thought. And how many more were to come? Even now he could imagine the horror and panic that were ensuing in Chicago. And within minutes it would probably be the same everywhere in the country.

The moon had come up and the sky was brilliant and clear. The cold air made visibility perfect and the only ominous note was the reddish tinge on the southeast horizon...

THEN HE saw the first of the invaders. High above, at perhaps ten thousand feet, he saw a fleet of aircraft. They were outlined perfectly in the moonlight. They appeared to be huge transport ships. From the fact that he could not hear the thunder of their engines he knew they were new and jet-propelled. They were travelling fast.

Suddenly the picture began to change. Flaring blobs of light appeared near the planes. Whitish plumes of smoke suddenly appeared everywhere. A host of little gnats—interceptors of the Air Defense Command—were on the hulking transport planes. Then what had been an orderly fleet of perhaps a hundred aircraft, changed into a writhing twisting melange of refugees seeking to escape the merciless sting of the interceptors.

The sound of rapid cannon fire and the hiss of rockets became audi-

ble to Harley. He saw plane after plane blossom into an inferno of flame and then plunge earthward. But even as the Soviets realized the intensity of the attackers, they began to jettison their cargoes. Amidst the burning, crashing transports, the sky became littered with hundreds, thousands of parachutes. The aircraft disgorged them in an endless stream.

Harley was petrified for a moment. If only he had a telephone! Without question the objective of the transport planes had been Chicago. Intercepted by these fighters, the commander had ordered the men out. Harley noticed that the parachutes did not open for a long time—a matter of merely hundreds of feet above the ground. The Soviets were well trained. And the reason was clear. Every one of the huge planes had been shot up. And the interceptors were trying to knock down the parachuting soldiers. It was ghastly and hideous and Harley wanted to shut his eyes to the spectacle but he couldn't. He realized that it was necessary. In this sort of warfare, mercy was neither given nor expected. It was fight without quarter. He could see the futile attempts made by some of the parachutists to fire at their attackers.

But the fighters were too fast for effective work and Harley estimated that at least seventy percent of the men would land successfully. Harley went back into the house. Only then did he realize how cold he was. He turned on the radio and selected a local station.

“—landed by the hundreds, in the general region of Esterhaven. Troops at Madison are being rushed to the scene but they cannot reach here soon enough. All able-bodied males with firearms are to report to the junc-

tion of U.S. 83 and 42. In order to eliminate confusion, pile four men to a car. We belie—”

Harley didn't wait to hear anything else. He pulled on his heavy mackinaw. Dashing over to the desk, he took out three boxes of cartridges for his rifle, picked up the gun from where he had leaned it, checked its magazine and strode out the door.

He jumped into the car. A quick check showed the gas gauge to read three quarters full. It was a good forty miles to the junction point. He might make it in an hour, but the roads were so slippery that he couldn't chance travelling to fast.

As the car purred along, Harley felt the unreality of the whole thing. In a matter of hours, the whole world had changed. A little while ago he had been reflecting on the beauties of a vacation. Now he was an irregular, a guerrilla, fighting against invading Soviet parachutists. He had witnessed an atomic bomb attack and had seen an enormous air battle. It didn't make sense.

AS HE EASED the car around a turn in the road his headlights outlined the trees on either side. Suddenly a hoarse voice shouted, “Halt!” and even in the surprise, Harley detected the Slavic gutturals. He didn't know where the voice was coming from so he brought the car slowly to a stop.

A huge figure bounded out of the brush at the side of the road. It was a Soviet parachutist. He motioned with a sub-machine gun.

Harley started to open the door. As he did so, he brought the rifle along with him, parallel to his right leg. He flipped open the door all the way, shoved out the muzzle of the gun and at point blank range,

squeezed the trigger. The bullet caught the Russian in the chest.

A look of surprise appeared on his face as he crumpled to the ground.

He bent over the soldier. Surprised at his own assurance, he removed the sub-machine gun, a canvas sack of drums for it, the soldier's heavy pistol, and its cartridges. He fumbled gingerly through the man's pockets on his tunic. A Russian-English dictionary, some papers in Russian and some American money, obviously painfully counterfeited, were all the things he found. He was unable to read the man's identification disk except for the numerals which meant nothing to him.

Putting the weapons back into the car, Harley returned to the body and dragged it off to one side of the road. Then he got back into the car and went on. A strange feeling of apprehension began to overtake him. If *this* soldier was in the general vicinity that meant that there were probably others. He was still too far away from the road junction to know if anything was going on.

Ahead, a pair of headlights flashed into view from around a curve. A big heavy car came careening down the road, going much too fast for safety on the slippery surface. Harley wrenched his wheel to the right and the car responded by running off onto the shoulder. From the way that car was moving it certainly wasn't being handled by any civilians.

Grabbing the guns, Harley slid out the right side of the car and crouched behind it. As the heaving automobile came abreast of him, he could see it skid a little as the driver applied the brakes. At the same time a burst of gunfire stemmed from it and the glass in his car's windows disintegrated as the shower of gunfire destroyed them.

Breathing heavily from excitement but internally quite calm, Harley placed the Russian sub-machine firmly against his shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The weapon bucked and spluttered flame and fire. The heavy car, now just opposite him wobbled crazily, straightened out, then slid into a hopeless skid. It hit the shoulder of the road and toppled over. Two gray-clad figures, steel-helmeted, tried to emerge from the broken windows. Coolly and heartlessly, Harley cut them down. He sprayed the automobile from one end to the other to assure his victory. A jagged spurt of flame appeared as the gas tank caught fire.

Harley ran over to the wrecked vehicle and peered into it. Three bodies, bullet-riddled and contorted at crazy angles met his eyes before the flames drove him out of range.

BY NOW, he was trying to think of a logical plan. The woods around here were undoubtedly alive with Soviet soldiery and it was foolish of him to even think of trying to make the junction in the car. He'd either be captured or cut down. The thing to do was to remain on foot, always sticking to within easy range of hiding space in the fields and woods which bordered the road.

Encumbered with rifle, sub-machine gun, pistol and cartridges, Harley went back to his car, and fired his own gas tank with a burst of gunfire. He stepped back and satisfied, surveyed the flame. Now the Russians would not be able to use that car either.

Leaving the burning hulks, he walked briskly along the edge of the road. He walked for two miles at a brisk pace for it was surprisingly cold and a keen wind was rising, a wind that chilled him to the very

marrow. Twice he passed burnt out piles of aluminum and magnesium which had been Soviet transports. Quite often he passed by pulped bodies, their gray uniforms barely visible.

Suddenly he heard noises. There was the sound of motors and the chatter of voices. Harley ducked into the brush lining the road. Two minutes later he saw them. Coming down the road and making surprisingly little noise, was a Soviet column.

A half dozen light tanks, comparatively large for air-borne equipment, led the column. Recoil-less seventy-five millimeter cannon protruded from their turrets and there were rocket projectors attached to the sides. These monstrosities were followed by a number of jeep-like weapons carriers armed with rocket projectors and heavy machine guns. And in the wake of this were a couple of dozen American automobiles, no doubt confiscated on the spot and put to use by the parachutists.

Harley watched it roll by, with a sinking feeling. Undoubtedly it had monitored communications which accounted its moving away from the junction, although it didn't really matter much. He knew that it, with its military efficiency, could cut to pieces any motley array of rifle carrying farmers and local citizenry.

He estimated that there were at least a hundred and fifty men in this group. He watched the column turn left at a road a mile up the way, south toward Chicago.

Grimly Harley kept on. He passed a gas station. It was a burning wreck. He kept forging ahead. He had to reach a phone. Finally he passed a small house set far back from the road, one which the soviet column missed. He got the terrified farmer

to let him use the phone but it was dead.

Bitterly Harley realized that the Soviets had probably systematically cut every phone wire they could see. Their object was to spread confusion and hopelessness among the Americans.

Harley took a bicycle that lay near the house and pedaled toward the junction. Occasionally he would glance into the sky and every now and then he would hear the low-toned hissing rustle that changed into a bitter whine as a rocket passed overhead. A lot of projectiles were getting through and he wondered what the actual state of things was. How serious had the opening blow been?

AHEAD Harley heard the staccato sound of gun-fire punctuated by the hiss of rocketry. He dismounted from the bicycle and hugged the side of the road. When he topped a small rise he could see the "battle" spread out before him.

A half dozen Soviet tanks stood in a little group and fired madly into a fleeing mass of Americans. Overturned shattered automobiles were everywhere, and bodies littered the road.

In frustrated anger, Harley saw a car, guided by some brave soul, rip down the road straight at the tanks in an effort to crash them. It was a magnificent attempt at heroics—but it failed. The muzzle of a Soviet rocket projector swung from the side of the tank. There was a *whoosh*, and the automobile exploded in a mass of tortured metal and oil.

Harley stood still and watched the tanks move slowly up the road. For two minutes he cursed fluently. It was so hopeless trying to combat

well-trained and well-armed Soviet soldiery, with merely a motley array of side-arms. What was needed were rocket projectors, grenades, armored vehicles. Where was the Army?

Then he answered his own questions. Of course this was happening everywhere and the Army was probably overloaded with tales of parachutists. Harley turned off this road and took a black-topped side road. It too led through heavily forested territory.

As he pedaled past the horrible scene, the sound of gunfire came clearer to his ears. Somewhere up ahead there must be more fighting.

The road took an abrupt dip and spread before was a picture that heartened him. A small-scale but never the less ferocious pitched battle was going on. But even from here, Harley recognized a difference. The men opposing the Russians were not civilians. Civilians don't possess light artillery and rockets.

Soviet vehicles, armored cars, commandeered automobiles were scattered in confusion, motionless where they were abandoned, all along a stretch of road and many of them were burning fiercely. But their crews were far from inactive. They had abandoned their armor but were entrenched alongside the road or hidden in the heavy woods and thickets.

This much Harley deduced, since it was difficult in the dark to get a clear picture of what was going on. He dropped from the bike, and lay on his belly on the cold ground.

He crawled forward always staying near the brush. Finally he decided to take to it. It was safer. The gunfire crackled and roared ahead of him.

Suddenly he stopped. About forty feet in front of him, crouched about

the tripod of a bazooka-like rocket launcher were four Soviet soldiers. One was an officer and the man was directing the fire of the weapon with calm effectiveness.

HARLEY couldn't see their target from his position, but he heard them cry out with glee almost each time they sent out a projectile. He judged they were knocking out American armor.

The sub-machine gun was made ready. He put on a fresh drum. Then, carefully he drew a sight on the little group of crouching men. He took a deep breath and squeezed the trigger.

The chattering weapon in his hands belched flame and death. The little knot of men about the projector dissolved into a grotesque heap of distorted figures, killed so rapidly and unsuspectingly that they never knew what cut them down. Looking to either side Harley dashed up to the projector. No one had seen him.

The logical targets seemed to be a couple of tanks a hundred feet ahead. Their turrets were pouring out a continual blast of gunfire and their rocket projectors were doing the same.

He selected the leading tank. It seemed to be blanketing the Americans, preventing them from moving forward. Carefully he sighted on the junction of the turret with the tank body. He touched the firing button.

The rocket hissed out, moving slowly at first, then vanishing in a sudden burst of speed. A brilliant blossom of light appeared on the side of the tank and then it burst open.

The Russians became instantly aware of the source of the attack. Blindly Harley fired the rocket pro-

jector twice more. Then he got up and scooted deeper into the underbrush. Before he could go far a trooper loomed up before him. Harley saw the flash of the pistol and felt a white hot pellet sear his shoulder. But his sub-machine gun spoke in time and the Soviet crumpled.

He ran wildly back along the road from which he had come. In back of him he could hear the hoarse shouts and cries of fighting men.

After a short time he stopped. The sound of firing was quieting down. Trying to review the mad events of the night was impossible. Harley felt as if it was a weird dream.

He wondered what was left of everything. And yet, underneath his momentary depression he had a good feeling. That the Soviets would be wiped out, he had no doubt. But this nightmare of atomic bombing, this invasion and counter-invasion, this battle of attrition would not cease for a long time. He was anxious to get near a radio to find out what was happening.

Occasionally, overhead, the orange flame of a rocket would appear for a short time then vanish into the southern horizon, bound for some American city.

Harley shook his head. The gunfire in back of him had ceased completely. Then he was conscious of someone near. He whirled, bringing up the sub-machine gun and his finger tightened instinctively on it. He was facing a man, a man who held his arms high in the air.

"Don't shoot!" the figure cried out, "don't shoot!"

"Keep your hands up and come forward," Harley ordered, now strangely calm. "Let me look at you." He needn't have looked closely of course. The tall, erect figure before

him was a Russian officer. The gray uniform was dirty and blood stained and Harley could see that the effect of keeping his arms up was causing the man pain. He looked carefully. The man was unarmed.

"All right," he said, "put 'em down."

"I am Lieutenant Kirov," the man said in perfect English, marred only by the slightest trace of Slavic gutturals, "and I wish to surrender. Will you take me?"

"I'm not a soldier," Harley replied, "but I guess I can accept your surrender."

"Good. There's no use fighting. My company has been destroyed." He grinned—almost a grimace rather than a smile—"I should have fought to the death—my orders say so—but life is sweet—even here."

Harley laughed aloud at this specimen of the Soviet regime philosophizing. "Yes," he said, "I imagine they'll let you live. But you should have thought of that before."

The Russian shrugged. "I'm a soldier," he said, and in those words implied a lot of the futility of the whole thing. Harley offered him a cigarette which he took gratefully.

"Sit down," Harley commanded him. "We may as well wait to be picked up. I don't want to get my head shot off by some trigger-happy soldier or civilian. The war's not going so well, eh?"

"I have no idea," the Soviet officer answered. "I do know our rockets were launched yesterday—and there were plenty of them. But I suppose you've answered in kind."

"I hope so," Harley said fervently.

THE CONVERSATION was broken off by the arrival of a column of American soldiers with nu-

merous civilians trailing them. A small group of downcast Russian soldiers, walked single file in their midst.

"Here's another one," Harley called out. "What's the news?" Then he heard the car radio...

"—in spite of very heavy damage to all major cities by atomic war-headed bombs and rockets, America is a functioning nation. Soldiers and civilians alike have responded to the attack. The country, while badly hurt, more in some areas than others, is far from paralyzed, and the damaged sections are being restored as rapidly as possible.

"The Secretary for Defense, however, warns that we can continue to expect large scale aerial invasions for some time to come. All police, militia, and mobile military forces as well as civilians are receiving general orders on how to deal with such attackers. Right now, as everyone

knows, we are in the process of rounding up the remnants of the first wave.

"We have as yet received no information on the effectiveness of our counter-attack, but if those soldiers exhibited anything like the skill and courage we have shown at home, the answer will be plain.

"Again we caution—"

The officer switched off the radio. "Enough?" he asked and a broad grin spread over his face.

Harley dropped back and boarded a truck that started up with the column. He felt numbed and exhausted. There was hardly enough strength left in his body for him to move. Yet he felt an exultation that transcended tiredness. *And the rockets came*, he thought, *and we threw them back*.

Someone in the truck started to sing softly *America*. And they sounded as if they meant it.

THE END

ANY ODORS AROUND



By CHESTER HUMLING



WE ARE ALL acquainted either by personal contact, or by reading, with the fact that human beings are subject to the loss of one or more of the five senses, either by accidental, or natural causes.

Most of us think immediately of blindness or deafness when this subject is mentioned. However, it is a curious fact that a great many people today are leading perfectly normal lives with only four of their senses!

The lacking fifth sense in the case of these people, is one that would be hard to detect by the ordinary person. It is called Anosmia, the lack of the sense of smell.

The causes of this somewhat curious affliction are many. In its simplest form, the condition may arise from nasal obstruction, and often, when certain surgery is performed, the condition is either alleviated or cured.

However, there are many other causes of

the loss of this sense. Causes which are not quite as simple in their origin, and as a consequence, not as easy to remedy.

There are some people who are afflicted with a disease of the nerves involved in smelling. And a great destroyer of the nasal sense of smell is the much feared brain tumor. The loss of the sense of smell may be even indicative of the presence of a brain tumor, and if such is the case, very often the exact type or position of the tumor may be more readily detected, since any lesion in the brain must be on both sides of the cortex in order to eliminate the ability to detect odor.

The loss of this sense, while somewhat annoying to the victim, is in reality not a great loss. In fact, it may be considered almost a blessing to some urbanites who are forced to inhale the odious exhausts of thousands of motor vehicles in their daily routines traveling through city streets!

THE END

The MYSTERY of the CAT'S BACK

By G. L. Cleggett

Jock and Madame Quane found themselves hurled into the fourth dimension when their hair-curler shorted out . . .



THERE COMES a time to every good cosmetic salesman when he must do, die, sell or turn in his cold cream.

That time had come for Jock Tate. He cast a weary eye upon the sleek facade of the beauty shop before which he stood.

Beside him stood the boss, portly, grey haired, eminently successful. He said: "Jock, sell Madame Q or turn in your territory! You've been stalling around enough. I don't want any deadheads working for me! This

dame is tough, but she can be sold. She has an influence in this part of the country, and we want to be able to say she handles our line of goods. She's a woman, she's single, she's good looking, there's no reason on earth why she shouldn't be susceptible to your masculine charm and salesmanship, if you have any. This is the ultimatum, Jock Tate. Sell, or quit. Or else I cut off your expense account."

The boss heaved his two hundred and fifty pounds of mostly unneces-



The big tom cat leaped straight up into the tangled web of wires on Betty's head

sary flesh into his flashy new Buick and departed. Jock heaved on his suspenders, straightened his Windsor knot, dusted off his knees with his palm, buttoned his vest. Cocking his hat on one side, he pushed open the door of Madame Quane's Salon.

Madame Q looked up from the permanent wave she was working on, the many complicated heating tubes of the wave machine about her arms and hands making her look like a Goddess of the Modern Machine. The things always reminded Jock of milking machines, milking money out of poor dim-witted females who thought they just had to have wavy hair, no matter what nature intended for them.

"Good morning, Madame," began Jock in his most dulcet tones.

"I don't want any and don't slam the door as you go out!" cried Ma-

dame Q in no murmur as she glanced at his tastefully decorated sample case, monogrammed as it was with the crest and heraldic arms of Sheraton Beautician Supply Co.

"Not here to sell," went on Jock, paying no attention. "Just distributing test samples of certain new products, want to find out the customer reaction. Don't cost you a cent."

"Make guinea-pigs out of my best customers? I should say not! Get on with you; I don't want any."

"Our products compare favorably with any product I see on your shelves." Jock got that out with a staccato emphasis. This dame was tough!

"Don't trust any new product! I heard of the cases of poisoning from permanent wave preparations. I can't take any chances. One law-suit would

break me. Why take a risk?"

Madame Q had still not ceased busily to do up and insert the blonde strands of Betsy Binney's honey-colored hair. Betsy murmured: "I can wait, Helen. Take a look at his line. He only wants to leave samples. He's got to live, same as us."

HELEN Q turned away from her work, poised with her hands on her hips, looking Jock over. Jock looked back. Neither was greatly enthused by the sight, to judge by their expressions. Jock was just a little taken aback. This dame had too much on the ball. Tall as himself, with piercing black eyes and a build like a Valkyrie, strong-shouldered and wide-hipped, with a big handsome face and red cheeks, a wide and beautiful mouth that was set too sternly just now. Her black hair was up-swept in a perfect hair-do. Her white, almost transparent smock did not hide a great deal of her magnificent physique.

What Helen Q saw was a middle-aged bar-fly, with a suit that had seen better days, an eye to indefinite of focus to be quite honest, the flair of the big city about his big knotted tie, about his heavy, clean shaven jowls.

What Betsy saw from her seat beneath the wave machine was a perfect gentleman, of the cosmopolitan type, a little different among these women, doing his best to pretend selling cosmetics to beauty shops was his dream vocation. Betsy was closer to the truth than Helen. Jock was used to the job, did enjoy it, and he had been around. His suit was worn, but not too much. And if his eye was a little shifty, why a man has to keep them open when dealing with women. You never know what angle they'll pull next.

As Jock put his case on the counter, the lid flew open unexpectedly, startling Madame Q into stepping backward. Her high-heeled pump came down upon Tom, the only pet that she humored around the shop. Tom came out of his doze on a dead run, and for a big tom cat he was fast! He ran up Betsy's leg, jumped from the arm of the big metal chair straight into the tangled web of wires and heating tubes that Madame Q had just been creating about Betsy's fair head.

Which would have been understandable and expected, for a cat's tail hurts when a woman's high heel topped by a hundred and fifty pounds of firm flesh crush it pretty near off. Only mysterious thing was, just as the cat landed in the wires, there was a soundless, shuddering kind of crash—and cat, curling machine and Betsy all disappeared in one wave of purple light!

Where they had been, there remained now only a shimmering, dull-purple void. A void without shape, almost without apparent reality—except that where it was, *nothing else was!*

Helen Q gave an exclamation not of astonishment, but of vexation. "My new machine! My best customer! *That danged cat!*"

Jock slowly closed his loosely hanging lower jaw, and began to back toward the door. If he knew women, she was going to blame this on him. He was right.

Only she didn't get that far. Helen Q walked over to that purple eerily shimmering void and walked right into it. And where she had been, was *nothing but that nothing!*

Jock would have fled the scene, except that he wanted to know for sure *what happened?* He'd be telling about this to his dying day, and it

behooved him to get the details.

FROM THE other chairs and cubby holes of the steamy back parts of the shops came hurrying girls on their clicking high heels. Jock tossed his hat into the aching void staring at him where his most necessary prospect had vanished. The hat vanished, too. Jock sat down on his sample case.

"What happened?" asked a popeyed red-head done up in beautician curlers with a kind of bed sheet wrapped around her neck. Jock couldn't tell what she looked like; she had No. 3 beauty clay laid on thick. Jock said: "The cat. . . ."

The red-head stared at the purple shimmer of nothingness where the capable Madame Q had been wont to operate.

"I'm gonna call the police! You can't blame *that* on a cat!"

Jock picked up the sample case as he stood up. "I'll see you later, girls," he called over his shoulder. Jock wasn't taking any chances on having to explain that cat to a local chief of police. He had had enough.

Later, some twenty miles away, after sundry back tracking had told him he was not followed; in the neighboring town of Moberg Jock registered at the hotel. In his room he sat down to figure out just what had happened. To him, something beyond human experience had taken place before his eyes, but he wanted to think just what. His cogitations used up nearly one pint of Old Hiram Walker. By that time he had the answer.

"S' the fourth dimension! The hair wave machine just got crossed up in its wiring, shorted itself into an accidental device to place a strain on the warp and woof of space, and dropped the dear Madame Q right into the

fourth dimension! Or some dimension anyway; how do I know what dimension? By gosh, that thing is a great discovery! No telling what I might do with it if I could get it back, figure out just what happened. I could go on the stage—greatest disappearing act in history. Or I might take up pioneering, if that other place they are in is what I think it is, another world! I've got to go through and find out! But how do I know I can get back? I can't take the chance."

So, half talking to himself, Jock Tate fell asleep. When he awoke, he had a headache, it was pitch dark night, and the watch on his wrist said it was eleven o'clock. Jock decided it was now or never! He got back into his Pontiac, drove back to Madame Q's. He parked a block away, made his way to the front of the shop. A half-dozen people stood in front of the beautician's parlor, but the blue front of an officer barred the closed door. Jock sidled close, keeping his face in the shadows. He wanted to hear just what had gone on since he left the place.

"I tell you it's black magic! Two women disappeared, and the chief himself almost fell into the hole! And you can't even see what it is they fell into, just that purple light and nothing else to see. It's beyond man's comprehension! I say they ought to close this building forever, and forget there ever was a Madame Helen Quane's beauty shop here. 'T'would be safer than any darn investigation will be!"

The glum-faced officer had evidently heard quite a lot. "Why don't you men go on home and forget it. Won't be nothing more done till tomorrow, less'n they find *that cosmetic salesman* that's back of it all. And if I was him, I wouldn't show

my face around here! So go on home, you won't miss anything."

Jock had heard enough. He took off precipitately in the opposite direction, then slowed his pace as he saw the others look after him.

Jock Tate sat for a long time in his Pontiac, vintage '41, making up his mind. At last curiosity moved him to investigate the rear of the shop. The absence of signs of life encouraging his newborn desire to have the secret of the purple shimmer for his own, he tried the back door, then the windows. One window had a cracked pane, Jock eased out the broken pieces, unbolted the window frame.

INSIDE, HE made his way through the empty shop to the front. Here he could see plainly the policeman outside, the three or four idlers, and the vacant street. No one else had chosen to sit up with that strange shimmering hole in nothingness. Jock stood a long time looking into the place where Helen Q wasn't. Then he tossed in his fountain pen. He was surprised to see it sail out in a minute, with a piece of paper attached. He looked at the paper, the heading said: "Madame Q, Beautician" followed by the lines of a note pad. It was from her pad for jotting down the sum due for her work. In it someone had written: "Please bring help. What are you waiting for? This is a terrible place!"

Jock scrawled across the pad: "Is it safe to jump into the place?"

After the pad had traversed the invisible barriers once again, it contained the words:

"Safe, but I don't know for how long. Please bring a gun, and some rope and stuff."

Jock began to rummage. In the drawer beneath the cash register he

found a lady's pearl-handled twenty-five. He dropped it in his pocket. There was no rope, so he took loose all the numerous cables from the half-dozen weird appliances and draped them over one arm. "Stuff", she had said. He couldn't think what the stuff might be that she wanted. But just then the policeman outside the door noticed his movement, unlocked the door, barged in yelling: "*Stand where you are or I'll shoot*"

Jock gave one jump into the blue shimmer. Behind him he heard the crack of a gun, felt the bullet whiz by his head.

He hit hard, fell flat on his face.

An instant later the policeman landed in the middle of his back with both feet. Jock blacked out in a sudden loss of the ability to breathe.

When he raised his head, he saw Helen Q and the honey-colored blonde standing quietly talking to the policeman some ten feet away. Apparently to them it made no never mind if he had been killed! Jock groaned as he tried to sit up. Helen Q took one look at his face, yelled: "It's him! The salesman!"

"That's the man, officer! If anyone knows anything, he does. Arrest him!"

"Sure officer, arrest me. That'll prove I own the only way to get into the fourth dimension." Jock was thinking fast as he looked around. But there wasn't much to think about, just great-leaved trees and soft grass-covered soil. It looked like a neglected part, without the vagrants on the benches. Without the benches, either. And over there was a great, striped tiger sneaking closer—the zoo must have lost some of its boarders.

THE OFFICER pulled his gun out of the holster, pointed it at Jock. Jock pulled the little pearl-handed

toy out of his pocket, pointed it at the cat. It was all of fifteen feet long, if it was an inch.

The officer took aim. "Put down that gun, you abductor of innocent women," growled the glum-faced guardian of the law.

Jock pulled the trigger, the tiger gave one great leap straight up in the air, a squawl like a million tomcats tangling toe nails at once, and made off into the leaves, sod flying from his feet in divots.

The cop turned his head at the racket, saw the tiger disappearing, and quietly dropped his gun in a dead faint. Helen caught him absent-mindedly as he collapsed, herself engaged in being surprised by the racket and exit of the carnivore.

Jock watched Helen Q put down the officer and approach. He mentally made a resolve never to judge the attractions of a woman until he had seen her under every condition. Helen Q looked as beautiful as a queen, tall and self-possessed and smiling. Behind her the honey-haired cutie cowered against a tree trunk, crying softly, too scared to make a loud sob.

"What are you sicking the cop on me for? I came in here to rescue you. You answered my note...." Jock was hurt.

"You didn't have anything to do with it, did you?" asked Helen.

"Why ask? You saw it happen! The tom-cat did it; he jumped in the wires of the heating units and shorted some of them. That produced a thing called a space-warp, and dropped you into another dimension. Don't you ever read science-fiction?"

"No, but I'll take your word for it. I didn't sick the cop on you, it was Betsy's idea. Do you think we can get out again?"

Jock looked at the hair-wave machine, and the chair beneath it. He

saw the cable was still connected, apparently. It ascended into the air for ten feet, and there it disappeared.

"Until some dimwit pulls that plug up above in the beauty shop, we have a chance. After that, no! So we'd better go back right now."

"Was that a tiger that you shot at?" Helen's voice was dulcet, her eyes calm and amused.

"How do I know? All I know is it was striped. If you really want to know, I never saw a tiger with hind legs like a rabbit's before in my life. So there is room for argument. But not time! We've got to get back into your shop before some ignoramus cuts us off forever! This accident can't happen twice in one lifetime, lady."

"I was always bored before today. Or is it yesterday?" Helen was pensive, looking tentatively at the slender black cord that led upward and disappeared in the air.

"And you are curious to look around down here? Like a woman, you think this is like being shipwrecked on a desert island—it's romance! Oh, no!"

Helen had taken hold of the cord and given it a firm tug. Jock grabbed her by her graceful shoulders, pulled her back. The cord had not become unattached, for the purple shimmer still quivered above their heads, seeming to emanate from the web of tangled wires above the hair dresser's chair and come to a focus just where the wire disappeared.

"Woman, if you want to turn explorer, you can do it *after* we have returned to your shop and prepared ourselves. We've got to have big game rifles, geologists, scientists, special help. We're in the jungle of an alien world! That may spell romance, but let me tell you it also spells several other words, all of them

meaning an early demise! So leave that cord alone. I give you my word I'll help you come back when you want, but honest to gosh, lady—we haven't even got a sandwich between us!"

"I'm never going back! I am sick to death of curling hair!"

"I'm sick of selling cosmetics, too, but let's go about this as if we had a brain between us. Not just cut ourselves off...."

Jock stopped in mid-flow.

Across the grass, toward the recumbent policeman, the bug-eyed honey-haired maiden, the tall luscious brunette Madame Q and the none too slender Mr. Tate, was hopping a peculiar being. He was evidently of an intelligent species—but of what species or what his purpose Jock could not fathom. Jock fumbled for the little .25 in his pocket, got it out.

THE CREATURE paused some ten feet from them and goggled. They all goggled back, except the policeman, who rolled over, stretched, raised his head and then as his eyes fell upon the strange apparition, let and a squeak. The blonde screamed, Helen Quane smiled, Jock let his mouth drop open.

"Welcome, strangers. Long have we of Faironia waited for this day. Long have we prayed. Welcome, welcome!"

Jock looked at the thing. It was about five feet high, of the general shape of a frog, but there the resemblance to anything earthly ceased. Its skin was smooth and bright blue, its eyes large, liquid and orange, and its hands and feet possessed of extremely long fingers and toes. Its carriage was almost graceful, it hopped like a frog, upright, landing on two feet among them.

Helen rose to the occasion. "How do you know our language?"

The gentleman frog spread its wide mouth wider, betraying a toothless maw and an enormous tongue inside. "We can hear you on a device similar to your radio, right through the barrier. But like you, we have up to now possessed no means of piercing the wall between us. One of our number saw you shortly after you arrived, and sent word. I have been appointed to receive you, for I have made a special study of your language and customs."

"Clear as lilac water," murmured Helen.

"Now if you'll give me your names, and tell me a little about yourselves—we have to keep a record of this momentous occasion for history. The details of your spatial crossing especially are most desired, for we have a great deal to think about in this respect. We are not sure we want an invasion from your side, you know."

A great light dawned within Jock Tate's skull. If these creatures ever found out that their coming was accidental and not planned, the secret of the creation of the space warp would be held by them, and not by Jock Tate! If they really did not want the barrier forever broken down, chances are none of them would return to their own world. Chances were already thin that he, Jock Tate, would ever make a profit from this fortuitous accident of the hair dressing device. Jock decided to dissemble.

"Which is exactly why we are here, to make sure that no invasion will ever occur from either side of the spatial barrier. I am glad to find we are at one in that."

Helen gave Jock a side glance, murmured. "You colossal liar, why not tell him the truth?"

THE FROGMAN goggled at Jock, and he hoped that Helen's aside and gone unnoticed. If this people didn't want visitors, it would be simple for them to disconnect the electric cable and leave them forever stranded here in Frogland.

"A means of trade between our worlds would be welcome to us, if we could have the trade without the aggressions which we hear going on upon your world. We are not going to invite any wars into occurring, you can understand."

"Quite, quite. My sentiments exactly. Now, my dear man, I didn't catch your name, but we have only just stepped over here to find out if communication and transition can be accomplished. Now that we have learned what we came for, would you be so kind as to get us a ladder so that we can step back through the opening? You see, we can't quite reach the area of warp unaided."

The frogman measured the distance to the point where the current cable disappeared with an eye most calculating. Then with a sudden bound, he flew through the air, and disappeared from sight.

"If that bird thinks of pulling that plug when he gets back—I hope he is as dumb as he looks!"

"My goodness, how he can jump!" Helen laughed, a little exasperatedly. "He didn't even ask what was on the other side."

After a moment the frogman reappeared, alighting beside them and looking at Mr. Tate with an expression of disparagement. He had evidently guessed the whole truth by a thirty-second examination of the beauty shop.

"So you can't get back without a ladder, and you won't be sent for without sending back for help."

Jock chose to ignore his summa-

tions. "What did you see? Anything more interesting than you're accustomed to seeing?"

"I saw a doze. gentlemen in blue suits like the one that person wears. They were surprised at my sudden appearance, and tried to capture me. I escaped them by leaping back at once."

"Well, they are policemen. They are there to keep unwary people from falling into the warp."

"Yes, as you have done. Or they are members of the military, and this is the first step in a planned aggression upon our world. That is the view I shall take of their presence, although I may know better. I must protect the interests of my people."

Jock saw that behind that great flat face with its propping eyes and wide gashed mouth was a shrewd brain. He decided to try to play things his way, the honest way.

"YOU ARE wholly right, Mister Whats-your-name. That is exactly how I would handle the whole affair—as if you were in danger of aggression. I'm with you one hundred per cent."

"You are so agreeable I think that hereafter you had better keep quiet. I might learn more from the other members of your little spying party. We know, you see, the customary attitude toward spies upon your world. We may insist that you all be shot as spies, you know! The deed would not be without precedent among your people."

"Oh, no! You wouldn't do that, would you, Mr. . . ." Helen turned her best professional manner loose upon the frogman, and Jock was relieved to see that it took immediate effect.

"My name, dear alien lady, is perhaps best pronounced in your tongue

with the three syllables A E and U."

"Aheeyou. A pretty name it is, Mr Aheeyou. You wouldn't have us ss-shot!"

"No, I am not a barbarian. But some among our people may demand such protection."

"If we were spies, would we ask your assistance to get back into the warp?" Jock disregarded the injunction to keep quiet. The frogman ignored him, did not answer.

The policeman, who had been nameless so far, now introduced himself.

Mr. Aheeyou, I've been listening to everything you say. It seems to me that you don't really understand this thing. That device sitting there is a hair curler, to make permanent waves. It shorted, and accidentally caused this whole danged affair. I never believed in such things before, but seeing is believing. My name is Frank Sampson, in case you want it for your records, and I'm proud to be here. And I agree with you, the less that porky Tate says, the better I like it."

The frogman goggled at Officer Sampson. "Honesty is the best policy, Mr. Sampson. You have explained a great deal, you know. I was beginning to think there was something impromptu about this expedition. Very impromptu!" Mr. Aheeyou seemed to be proud of his English; used it like a schoolteacher, right out of a book.

"Now that we all understand each other, just help us back through to our own little world," urged Jock. He wanted to get nold of an engineer who would be able to tell just how to reproduce the accident of the space warp at will. He didn't want to fool around until somebody else beat him to it.

"First you must accompany me to the city, where experts will examine you all and record the data. We must have data, you know."

Jock was getting plenty worried. He turned to Helen. "The ugpley upstairs, eh? While we're gone, um sumpchey ightmey the ugpley outlay ulpley."

"Yes, some chump might do that. Wonderful, wonderful, I'll be delighted."

Mr. Aheeyou smiled from ear to ear. He was very sharp. "So your return depends upon chance. I'm elight-edey otey earhey, essey."

Jock looked at Mr. Aheeyou's ears, suddenly brought into prominence by the corners of his mouth. They were small round organs somewhat like toadstools, without the gills. How anyone could hear with them seemed a puzzle. Jock decided to take Aheeyou's advice and keep his own none too small mouth firmly closed.

THEY WOUND off in the trail of Aheeyou's broad jumps, Helen lightheartedly taking in the scenery, Mr. Sampson engaged in an inspection of his boot toes as they showed one by one in front of him, Betsy timidly clinging to Helen Quane's arm, and Jock Tate bringing up the rear with every evidence of frustration upon his face.

They had hardly left the space around the permanent wave machine vacant when a rope ladder twined quickly down; and rapidly, one after the other, a procession of U.S. Marines descended. Everyone in Morville did not possess heads of solid concrete. Plenty had been happening. That plug that worried Mr. Tate so much was now one of the most closely guarded of military secrets.

After the Marines had deployed into the surrounding treescape for several hundred feet, an officer scrambled back up the ladder. Immediately after, down came a round dozen of grey-bearded physicists,

chemists, biologists and other assorted specialists, most of whom congregated around the purple shimmer and the strangely tangled wires of Helen Quane's permanent wave machine.

"The hair curler that put a permanent wave in space is not going to be lost to the U.S.A.," one solemn professor exclaimed to another.

"We can certainly reproduce the exact conditions, even with this quick examination..."

* * *

OVERHEAD, a great green lump on the trunk of a tree beside the purple shimmer goggled down, and his little round ears twitched. Otherwise, Ouyeeha, son of Aheeyou, did not move a muscle. But off in Praabe, the capital city of Faironia, a secretary began excitedly taking notes. For strapped to Ouyeeha's skinny chest was a flat, inconspicuous radio-like device over which he could talk without making an audible sound. It operated by picking up waves from his throat which did not need to be made audible to be heard by the sensitive device.

Here and there on other trees, similar inconspicuous lumps watched, their telescopic eyes goggling round and round. The citizens of Faironia were going to know what came next in this meeting of two worlds.

* * *

IN THE U.S.S.R., two hours later, permanent waves became a thing of the past. Every curling device in the nation had been confiscated by the Secret Police. In Canada, the British Embassy lost a secretary who decided to try out the device before he cabled the details on to Britain. He crossed the wires exactly as the confidential report indicated—turned on the permanent wave machine, and disappeared. So did the machine.

MEANWHILE, the little caravan headed by Aheeyou reached at last the civilized area of Faironia. That is, they reached a broad highway, along which the strangest vehicles rattled noisily, and stood there by Aheeyou, wondering what next.

They weren't motor cars, they did not give off fumes. They weren't wheeled vehicles, they didn't have wheels. They were walking machines, and Jock wondered at the strides they took; by rights they should have hopped along like Aheeyou. Four and six-legged, they progressed rapidly enough, moving one leg at a time in a regular rhythm, always keeping the remaining legs on the highway. Which sounds slow, but it wasn't. They were really picking them up and laying them down in a blur of speed.

"Stomp, stomp, the jalopies come," murmured Jock into Helen Quane's shell-pink ear.

"I think they're fascinating, Jock Tate!" Don't disparage my brave new world."

"Frogs, and frog-hacks!" grunted Jock. To him it was a disappointing world. To Helen it was the land of adventure.

"Why don't you use wheels?" asked Sampson.

Aheeyou glared scornfully. "Wheels were not thought of long ago, when those were built. They were built so durably! We have some wheels on vehicles, now, the last two hundred years."

Even as he spoke, wheels screeched to a halt in front of them; a long car stopped to pick them up. Jock guessed it had been waiting for them to appear. It was not exactly like an auto, but it had everything including six little round wheels, enclosed all-steel body, head lights and a chauffeur in uniform. Jock guessed it was a mili-

tary vehicle; there was something ominous and ultra-efficient about it.

"Did you build this from radio descriptions of motors cars," asked Jock, as they piled into the big three-seated body, where there was room for even more than the five of them and the driver.

"This was built many years ago, when your radio stations first began to function. We already had wheels and cars, but we adopted some suggestions to this type of vehicle," answered Aheeyou, smiling what he may have thought was a polite smile, but which looked to their eyes like a gape crossed with a grimace.

"We're off," cried Helen Q, as the car started smoothly, with whooshing noises like a Stanley Steamer from the interior works.

"Just so we're not *on*!" grumbled Tate, eyeing the enigmatic frog-face of Aheeyou. "I suspect these froggies don't intend to let anyone return if they can help it."

"I have just been advised," commented Frog-face, talking like a dictionary, "that a military force has followed you, complete with scientific observers. So set your mind at rest, there will be no point in keeping you, as the secret is no longer a secret."

"Hip-hooray," shouted Betty, but Aheeyou frowned on her exuberance and she subsided.

Sampson grinned widely; it was evident he felt vastly relieved to know that once more all the vast forces of law and order of his country were at his back. Tate pondered sadly, knowing that all chance of freezing onto the secret of the permanent wave machine had gone up in smoke. Helen Q. frowned; she had visions of modern conquest upsetting her adventure with war, she saw tanks and motorized cannon careening across

the weirdly beautiful land, herself hiding in a cellar of a bomb-wrecked frog dwelling.

"They may be sorry they were so precipitate in their entrance," went on Aheeyou, gazing straight ahead. But each of them realized that Frog-face was worried half to death at what might come to his people as a result of their freakish accident.

SO WERE plenty of Faironians. Around the area from which the party of strangers had just emerged and in which the U.S. Marines were streaming out in an ever widening circle of protection about the scientific miracle of the Wave Machine—permanent wave, that is—were gathering swiftly the Faironian equivalent of an army.

Not along the highways, not through the underbrush, not across the fields. No, the Faironians gathered through the tree-tops, for they were descended not from frogs, as their appearance would lead one to believe—but from tree-toads, and trees were their natural element.

Through the tree tops they swung and leaped and gathered, armed with weapons mysterious to the Marines. But they knew exactly what to expect from the "enemy" if hostilities came to direct action. For many years their technical men had studied the sounds that came from their radio-like devices which were able to receive the programs sent by their neighboring dimension—earth. They knew exactly what rifles were, and how far they would shoot, and what happened when they struck a man with a bullet. They knew what gas was, and on each Faironian back hung a gas mask. They were singularly ready, and they knew these alien invaders were in for a surprise.

No one was more surprised than the officers of those marines when their walkie-talkies began to talk back to them in book-English.

"Strangers in a strange world, halt. Your ignorant trespass upon Faironia will not go unchecked. Your advance must cease at once or we, the citizens of Faironia, will take measures. We will not stop complete extinction of every member of your expedition if you do not co-operate."

It was a worried Major-General who called the halt. The various radio receptive devices they employed kept right on emitting the voices—they had not met or seen a Faironian; they did not know what they were up against—and the Faironian strategists had no intention of allowing them to find out what they were up against.

"You have studied the device which accidentally opened the path into our world. You know how it operates. We now order you all back to your own world at once, and we warn you to use your knowledge with the utmost caution, for we will not hesitate to counter-invade your world if this offense is repeated. We will make arrangements for mutual trade and intercourse in due time. Now, you must withdraw!"

This was too much for the Marines. They held the line and waited for developments.

Meanwhile, in the capital city, the details of the appearance of the peculiar hair-curling device which had fallen into their world had been received from their spies, hanging still unobserved in the trees. True, the Marines had noticed some of the unobtrusive bumps (which were Faironians in their natural habitat) and thought nothing of them, probably some disease of the trees like willow galls. Such is confidence and impro-

per preparation for the invasion of an alien world. That the bumps on the trees were the citizens of Faironia did not occur to the brass among the Marines, sweeping the horizons with their field-glasses.

Faironian technicians were busily attempting to reproduce the hair-curling device with its accidental complications. As this consisted of inventing something which they had never had any use for before, the Faironians not having any hair, they were having difficulties.

So it was that orders went out from the capital to expel the invaders lug and luggage, and to bring the hair-curler to the capital.

* * *

AS JOCK Tate, Sampson, the cop, Madame Q and Betsy, the blonde, piled out of the military vehicle after Aheeyou's hopping exit, Helen Q gave a cry of delight.

"Did you ever see anything so utterly quaint?" she gushed to Jock.

Jock grunted. "I don't know what you're pleased about. Guess you didn't notice you couldn't sell a permanent wave to a million of 'em; they don't have any hair!"

"F'goshsakes, Jock, forget your cosmetic business, willya! This is an adventure, not a sales trip!" Helen Q. stood on tiptoe, her face a vision of excited interest, watching frog-hopings in all directions, taking in the quaint tall-pointed buildings, apparently stuck together out of glue and sawdust, or of some rough-surfaced plastic.

Aheeyou gave them no time to enjoy the quaint scenery. He hustled them into one of the taller-pointed structures, and in seconds they found themselves confronting an assemblage that looked like the town meeting of Frogville.

At a big square table were gathered

some two dozen ancient and important goggle-eyes dignitaries. These stared at the four strangers standing embarrassed before them until the silent scrutiny was nearly unbearable, and Jock broke the silence with:

"Gentlemen, this is an historic occasion! I have come here to negotiate a trade agreement between the state of Faironia and the great commercial enterprise called The Sheraton Beautician Supply Company!"

Aheeyou gave a loud and scornful croak, then gargled in very plain English, which he immediately followed with the Faironian equivalent: "These people came here accidentally, being precipitated into our dimension by means of crossed wires in a hair curling device."

Several of the great goggle-eyed heads conferred together over the table-top, and then the big one at the head of the table stood up. "Alien interlopers," he began, in English less perfect than Aheeyou's, but plenty good enough for them to understand, "since you are our guests inadvertently, we will not be harsh with you. We will merely lock you up till this affair is satisfactorily settled one way or another."

Jock saw the last glimmer of opportunity fade and swiftly die before his eyes, and shouted: "What about that trade agreement? I'm first on the scene, and I'm entitled to some preference over the horde of gyps that will come along when they hear about this!"

"There will be no horde of gyps, I assure you, my dear businessman. As for trade, if any agreement is determined upon, which is doubtful, considering what we know about you from your radio programs—it will be through your president at Washington, and not through any drummer of cosmetics."

The important looking froggie then turned to Aheeyou. "Is there anything we can learn from these unimportant citizens of the United States, Aheeyou, sir?"

"Lord Protector of Faironia, I venture to assume that nothing of importance can be learned from these people. They are entirely lower bracket, and have no influence of importance in their own land."

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Betsy. "And I thought Aheeyou was so polite to us."

AS AHEEYOU led them out of the august assembly, he murmured to Betsy. "The truth of the matter is—you can contribute nothing and I said so. Is the truth so impolite?"

"The truth is always impolite, and you know it!" Betsy frowned at Aheeyou.

"But so necessary," returned Aheeyou, as he turned the key in the lock of the door of the chamber into which he had led them. And the four travelers into a strange land found themselves prosaically behind bars.

Jock sat down on the wooden bench. "A lot of good this is going to do us. I hope you're just thrilled to death at our exotic adventure," he growled to Helen Q.

Sampson sat down and began to remove his shoes. "My feet are killing me," he grumbled, as he stretched out on the bench that ran around the room.

"I wonder if the frog people have bath rooms?" murmured Betsy, plaintively, looking about with an expression indicating need of the same for reasons other than a bath.

"If they do, they probable sleep in 'em!" growled Sampson.

"Oh, I think they're cute looking things," said Betsy.

"Cute, like a nightmare!" disagreed

Sampson, the cop with a scowl.

* * *

THE RING OF marines in the forest about the all-important hair-curler wondered for a few minutes about the plop, plop of strange fruits on the ground beginning so suddenly—and about the soft grey mist that stole so subtly along through the leafy aisles.

When they began to fall asleep, they worried their officers terribly, but about the time the officers decided some action was necessary, the personnel of the whole expedition was stretched sound asleep around the permanent wave machine. They looked like dead men to the Faironians dropping nimbly down out of the trees, erecting a ladder to the place where the cord disappeared into U.S.A.

One by one the sleeping men were pushed through the purple, shimmering opening until no one was left. Insistently the phone from the staff now installed in the beauty shop of Helen Quane jangled and jangled at the little desk in the tent below, but no one answered. Steadily the bodies of the sleeping men came up through the opening, and the Major-General in charge of "Operation hair-curler" began to tear his hair out trying to find out what was going on without entering the purple void himself. He detailed a squad of Marines to descend at once and find out what was going on—they did so, only to fail to report. Presently, like the others, their bodies were pushed up through the opening and stacked on the floor about the purple void by hands which did not allow the Major-General to assume anything but that the hands were not human. Just as he got Washington on the long distance phone, the cord leading to the plug in the wall that had become military secret

No. 1. was given a sharp jerk, the purple void disappeared—and the place where Helen Quane's best Beauticians' Chair No. 32 A special had stood, became only a blank and perfectly innocuous expanse of second grade oak flooring.

No cord, no plug, no hair curler, no fourth dimension, no captured citizens of the other world, no nothing, was all there was for one puzzled Major General to report to Washington on the connection he had just completed.

Meanwhile, far to the north of Faironia, a Canadian—British Embassy official was plodding along through an alien jungle, and in the Embassy, a dozen wires hummed with comment on the purple void he had left behind him.

* * *

AHEEYOU GOGGLED and bowed before Helen.

"Dear lady of another world, I regret to tell you that we must evict you from our world, much as we have enjoyed your stay."

Helen smiled, patted her hair. "I am very sorry to leave you, and I would like to stay longer and maybe write a book about it. But if you insist, why there's nothing I can do about it."

"As for you companions of this fine woman, I am not sorry to see you go, and goodbye!"

Whereupon Aheeyou turned upon his big, flat web heels, and left them. Presently came a guard of four frogmen, escorted them to a car, whirled them to a vacant field outside the city. Here they found Helen Quane's Beauticians' Chair, Model 32, set up in state with a military guard. They had moved it to a handier location. Upon their appearance, someone pulled a switch, and the purple haze sprang into being.

Helen Q took Jock's hand, grimaced.

"We're being kicked out of frog paradise, Jock!"

"Tain't much fun anyway, Helen. Why I've had more fun going fishing. But it is kind of insulting to be sent home like misbehaved kids."

Gently herded into the purple nothingness, they found themselves standing at the corner of Third and Main in Homesburg, fifty miles from their destination.

Evidently the Faironians had found a place to set up the hair curler where the levels of the two worlds coincided. For there was no bump as the purple veil disappeared from their eyes, and Homesburg became a fact about them noisily, for they were standing in the middle of the traffic lane! The purple globe of nothing-but-a-space-warped had been holding up traffic for several minutes! As the light winked out, and the cop saw them, he came over bellowing:

"Just what is going on here?"

Helen Q smiled devastatingly. "Just what do you think, officer?"

The officer stood with grim-set jaw relaxing. "Now that you mention it, I don't know, and I don't want to *think* about it! Will you please get out of the way?"

Jock and Helen and Sampson and Betsy got in the taxi; headed for the home town. Upon the arrival at Helen Q's beauty shop. Jock followed Helen and Betsy into the shop.

* * *

HELEN BEGAN to get into a clean white smock. Betsy got into another vacant chair, behind the vacant place where No. 32 had formerly sat.

Jock picked up his sample case, stood gazing disconsolately at the

sleek back of Helen. She only moved to finish the wave for Betsy Binney. Jock coughed discreetly.

"Now about these samples, Miss Quane, I hate to mention it, but if I don't sell you something, I will be minus one job. This is my last chance."

Helen glanced about the shop, dirty and upset from the leavings of a suddenly-called-away staff of army officers, from the big feet of a number of large fat policemen, and smelling like anything but a beauty shop.

"Well, since you are out of a job, why don't you go to work here? I could use a man around here who knows something about the work. You can start in sweeping up."

Jock set down the sample case, paced back and forth. Was there or was there not a certain something in Helen Q's firm and attractive voice? Beside the wall leaned a broom. Jock took off his coat. *Beside the broom the tom-cat lay asleep.*

"Oh, a male beauty operator!" Betsy squealed. "Will that bring the girls!"

"Exactly," laughed Miss Q.

Jock got in a good lick before Tom, the cat, got going. Then he started to sweep up the place.

"This," muttered Jock Tate, "is all your fault, you mangy..."

"You let that cat alone!" Helen cried, stepping back and eyeing Betsy's hair.

"That'll do till you get a chance to run in Betsy, again. I've got to tend to things around here, you'll excuse me?"

Betsy jumped out of the chair and headed for the door.

Helen stood directly where Jock would sweep next. Jock stopped sweeping, stood looking at her figure, his eyes running up the fine arch of her hips, the proud swell of her bust, to stop above her luscious mouth on the tip of her fine nose. Then he

looked at her eyes.

"You didn't ask how much I'm paying you," said Helen.

"If you think I care," Jock began, but then somehow she was in his arms!

They opened their eyes to see the purple void again where the first chair had been. Out of it Aheeyou poked his head. Then his hand. In the hand was Jock Tate's hat, freshly brushed.

"You forgot this," said Aheeyou.

"Drop dead!" Jock yelled at him.

"So sorry," murmured Aheeyou, and the purple void disappeared for good. But Helen's "Wave machine" was back in its old place!

* * *

FAR TO THE north, in Faironia, a big striped tiger was licking fat

chops over the bones of a very dead British diplomat.

In Russia, a line of very soundly sleeping Red Army soldiers was being handed out of a purple void.

* * *

A CABLE UNDER the sea was electrically surging with power, transmitting the words:

"Adjacent space peopled with very intractable inhabitants. We suggest military project be abandoned in favor of research leading to trade negotiations."

* * *

"But what I can't figure, is *how* did the tom-cat get back?"

THE END

LAKES OF LEGEND

★

By Pete Bogg

★

LDEST inhabited lands in the world, the countries of Asia abound in legends handed down from ancient times. Every phenomenon or aspect of nature not easily explainable by the untutored minds of the native people carries its share of legend and superstition. Science can now account for many of the natural events which gave rise to these legends.

For instance, there is a small lake in Mongolia which occasionally burns with a red flame, terrifying animals and people alike. Naturally, this spot is rich with legend. The story goes that a meteor fell at this place and sank far into the earth, and the lake appeared in the hole thus made. Creatures half-man and half-demon inhabit subterranean passages thereabouts, and are constantly trying to get rid of the huge mass of stone. They raise the rock a bit, but in spite of their every effort, it settles back again. The water is set on fire by the intensity of the struggle. The real explanation of the fires is probably that oil from underground deposits rises to the surface of the water, and is set aflame by the hot rays of the sun, or by campfires of the shepherds.

At another place high in the mountains

is a huge lake, deep and cold, the Kosogol. It is eighty-five miles long, and from ten to thirty miles wide. The performances of this body of water have given it a reputation full of prejudice and terror. Passenger and fishing boats use the lake, but sometimes to their great danger. On perfectly calm summer days, the lake will suddenly produce mountainous waves. In winter, when the lake is covered with ice, occasionally the ice will be broken up entirely, while great clouds of steam rise from the surface. The lake is rich in fish, trout and salmon and a wonderfully edible white fish. But at times the outlet river is completely dammed by masses of dead fish.

The explanation for these various phenomena is that the lake lies in a region of active volcanoes, and no doubt there is volcanic action beneath the lake as well as in the surrounding mountains. A volcanic eruption would account for the mysterious large waves; and streams of hot lava, or perhaps sporadically discharging hot springs would break the ice on winter days. Great underwater convulsions would also account for the large quantities of dead fish.

THE END



By GUY ARCHETTE

Glenn Travers knew there was a great mystery lying out in the void — but he did not suspect the incredible danger of it . . .

RENDEZVOUS in SPACE

"THERE'S something mighty funny about this flight, skipper," Jupe Barlow said. "How much further into space are we going, anyway?"

Glenn Travers turned in response to the first mate's worried question. He hesitated a moment, then smiled wryly.

"I guess you ought to know the truth, Jupe. I don't know anything about our destination. In fact, I don't know any more about this trip than you do yourself."

"What!" Startled silence fell over the control room at Jupe Barlow's dismayed gasp. The faint, steady roar of the freighter *Perihelion's* engines rose into the silence like a sound

alien and menacing.

At the control console, Pilot Bob Selden jerked around in his padded chair. His features, already lined with the strain of the unusual voyage, were twisted into an expression of alarm.

"It's all right, Bob," Travers said reassuringly. He forced a grin. "Jupe just got taken in by a little joke of mine."

Selden nodded dubiously and turned back to his controls. Travers shot Jupe Barlow a warning glance.

"Great space, Jupe, watch yourself!" he whispered fiercely. "The men are jittery as it is. Give them any more to worry about, and they'll crack up as sure as you were born."

The short, burly first mate looked

Travers fed a burst of power to his rockets and felt himself being propelled away from the vicinity of the Martians. But even as swiftly as he moved he knew he might never make it . . .



chastened. Then his eyes puckered in a bewildered frown.

"Skipper, do you mean what you said? You don't know where we're going?"

Travers nodded grimly. "That's right. All I've done so far was to follow the directions Professor Rickard gave me. Right now we're following his last set of space co-ordinates. But just where they're going to take us, I don't know."

"Must be one of Saturn's moons," Jupe decided. "It's just got to be one of Saturn's moons. We're headed straight for Saturn, skipper."

Travers shook his dark head. "No, it isn't Saturn."

Jupe's leathery features twisted in anguish. "Not Saturn! But, jumping asteroids, skipper, no freighter's ever gone as far as Saturn before—least of all clear past it! Only scientific expeditions have pushed that far out into space. And they had special ships, special equipment. . . . When the crew finds out we aren't stopping at Saturn, all hell will bust loose!"

"That's what I'm worried about," Travers said gravely. "The men are edgy as it is over the way we've left all the regular routes to strike so far out into uncharted space."

"Skipper—we...we aren't headed for Uranus, are we?" Jupe's voice faltered with sudden, increased anxiety. "Tell me, skipper—not Uranus?"

TRAVERS grinned faintly. "No, Jupe, you can rest easy on that point. Only the Corliss expedition has been as far as Uranus, and if Professor Rickard and his daughter had any intention of going there, I'd have refused flatly."

"Then where in space are we going?"

"I don't know exactly. But I do

know it's some point about a half-million miles past the Saturnian System. I've checked Professor Rickard's co-ordinates against a star chart, and that's the conclusion I've reached. Just what's going to be there, though, I can't guess. Rickard and the girl won't tell me anything."

"They're mighty close-mouthed," Jupe muttered, nodding.

"But they're paying us mighty well," Travers reminded. "Far more, in fact, than the trip is worth—in spite of the risk."

There was a moment of silence. A slow grin spread over Jupe's face.

"That girl, skipper. A beauty, isn't she?"

"Ardis Rickard?" Travers nodded reluctantly, admiration kindling in his brown eyes. He had to admit that Ardis Rickard was beautiful—incredibly and outrageously beautiful. She paled into mediocrity almost every lovely girl he had ever seen.

But her charm was not merely physical, Travers knew. On the few occasions he had spoken to her, he had caught glimpses of a personality that was warm, keenly intelligent, vital. These occasions are rare, however for as much as she was beautiful Ardis Rickard was retiring and mysterious.

Too damned mysterious, Travers decided grimly. There was something about her—something that didn't... jibe. Travers couldn't quite explain it even to himself, for it wasn't anything that could be put into words. It was just a vague, uneasy feeling.

He had felt it with sharp intensity the first time he had seen her, the day she and her father, Professor James Rickard, had walked into the office of his tiny freelance freighting outfit in Port O'Connor on Mars. At first glance Ardis Rickard's loveliness had been bizarre, overwhelming

—unearthly. It had hit him with the effect of a physical blow.

After he had recovered himself and gotten down to the purpose of their visit, he had swiftly become aware of something else—some quality about her, which, as much as her beauty, set her apart from other girls as man's physique sets him apart from the apes. She was so different as to be almost...alien.

Professor Rickard had desired to hire Travers and his ship, the *Perihelion*, to transport a certain unspecified cargo to an also unspecified destination. The cargo was a large one and the proposition altogether unorthodox, but Rickard had offered an amazingly large sum in payment for Travers' services.

Travers had accepted, since business, in competition with larger freighting outfits, had been anything but good. Moreover, the mysteriousness of the arrangements had excited his curiosity, and though the affair was entirely suspicious, he knew Rickard's reputation well enough to be sure that the man wouldn't indulge in anything actually illegal.

Rickard was, in fact, a famed authority in scientific circles. With his partner, Professor Harry Jonathan, he had brought to light much new and revolutionary data on deep space radiations. Aside from their scientific aspects, the names of the two men were synonymous with adventure and extraordinary bravery; much of their work had been carried on in the most remotest depths of interplanetary space, space penetrated so far by only a few intrepid explorers.

THE LAST Travers had heard of Jonathan and Rickard, they had gone off on another of their expeditions into deep space. Then Rickard had come walking into Travers' of-

fice in Port O'Connor, with the glorious beauty he had introduced as his daughter. The news had surprised Travers; he could not recall any previous mention of the girl.

Another strange fact to the affair was the fact that Professor Harry Jonathan had never once been in evidence, nor throughout all the proceedings had his whereabouts been explained. Travers had thought Jonathan and Rickard to be inseparable, and thus Rickard's independent activities were a major mystery.

Professor Rickard's nameless cargo was now stored safely in the holds of the *Perihelion*, and the freighter itself was on the last leg of its journey into the unknown. Rickard and his daughter had kept themselves secluded in their cabins during most of the trip. Some subject of grave importance seemed to occupy most of their time, for they seemed always to be engaged in serious, low-voiced discussion. Travers was certain it had to do with the purpose of their mysterious voyage, and was thereby all the more intrigued.

Abruptly Travers felt Jupe Barlow grasp his arm. A man had slipped into the control room, shutting the door quickly behind him. It was third mate Bill Paxton, and glancing at the man's face, Travers tensed with unease. Paxton looked worried.

"Cap—I've just been down in the hold," Paxton announced breathlessly. "I've been keeping an eye on things, like you told me to. And do you know what? I caught that ratty little Martian, Dorg Sandas, snooping around again!"

"The third time!" Travers breathed harshly. "What in space is Sandas so interested in, anyway?"

"Rickard's cargo," Paxton said, his tone flat and grim. "Each time I caught him, he was always snoop-

ing around the stuff."

"I knew we shouldn't have hired that sneaking Martian, skipper," Jupe grunted. "Martians are always trouble makers, and Sandas is up to no good. You can lay a course on that."

Travers rubbed the ball of a thumb against his angular jaw, frowning. "I'd hate to have to lock him up. Sandas is a good injector-man—even if he is a Martian."

Travers was aware, as he used the word, that Dorg Sandas wasn't a Martian in the sense that he was an extra-terrestrial form of life. The offspring of Earth colonists to Mars, he had simply become so shaped mentally and physically by his environment that he had lost most of his ancestral characteristics.

Martians were further set apart by the fact that they were culturally and politically opposed to Earth; their most strenuous efforts were devoted to securing freedom from Earthly ties. Earth was tolerant, and while reluctant to give Mars complete independence, it had permitted the formation of a small Martian state, Marsland. This was at present controlled by Karn Norgan, a high-pressure politician, whose power had become little short of dictatorial.

"It's damned funny," Jupe muttered. "Just before we're ready to blast off, Snell, our old injector-man, fails to show up—and then this Martian, Sandas, applies for a job."

"Might not mean anything," Travers pointed out. "Just a coincidence. Sandas knows his job.... Well, this trip will soon be over, and with the cargo off our hands, Sandas won't have anything to interest him. But keep a close watch on him, anyway, Bill."

PAXTON nodded. "I sure will. And, Cap, we're landing somewhere

around Saturn, aren't we? You know, the crew's getting space-fits with worry, and I'm afraid they might start something if we go any further."

Travers shook his head gravely. "No—we're not landing near Saturn. Our destination is some point about a half-million miles away. As for the crew, they're bound by space law to my orders, and they'd better do just what I say."

A flicker of motion in the corner of his eye brought Travers whirling around. He saw the figure of a man slipping out of the control room door.

"You there!" Travers snapped. "What do you think you're doing?"

It was a member of the crew. The man halted, transfixed, half in and half out of the door. His face was twisted and pale.

"Yes, sir, Captain!" he blurted. He made a clumsy salute. "Professor Rickard sent me, sir. I was cleaning the passage outside his cabin, and he told me he wants to see you, sir."

"Very well," Travers fastened stern brown eyes on the man "After this, knock before you enter the control room, understand?"

"Yes, sir!" The man saluted again and scurried away.

"I don't like this," Travers said slowly. "Trouble's going to pop now. Keep a close watch on things, Jupe. I'm going to see what Rickard wants."

Travers found the scientist seated before a table in his cabin, tapping a pencil on a sheaf of papers. In a chair, nearby, sat Ardis Rickard.

As always, everything else seemed to fade into the background as he looked at the girl. Each sight of her was as startling and pulse-quickenning as the last.

She sat there in the chair, her gold-flaked eyes fixed gravely upon him, her perfect lips compressed as though by some ever-present inner tension.

Red-gold hair, a glorious cloud of silken softness, fell in thick curls to her shoulders. A simple traveling dress did little to conceal the rounded lines of her splendid figure. Her small hands were clenched tightly in her lap,

With an effort, Travers took his eyes from the girl and looked at Rickard. "You wanted to see me, sir?"

"Yes, Captain." The scientist extended a sheet of paper. He was broad and heavily-muscled. There was nothing about him of the pale, stoop-shouldered scholar. Disregarding the obvious refinement in his face and the shrewd intelligence in his eyes, he might have been a rough meteor miner from the Asteroid Belt. His head was totally bald, and a bristling gray mustache overhung his square, firm mouth.

"These are my blast factors for deceleration," Rickard explained. "You will act on them as soon as we have passed Saturn's orbit."

Travers nodded and took the sheet. He hesitated, then his features hardened.

"Professor Rickard, I've said nothing of this to you before, but I think we've reached the point where I'm entitled to an explanation as to what this is all about. Your strange secrecy is undermining my authority here aboard ship. I'm having serious trouble with my crew as it is."

Travers heard a faint gasp. He saw Ardis Rickard leaning tautly forward in her chair. Rickard placed a hand over hers in reassurance. He nodded at Travers.

"I can quite understand that, Captain. However, you need not worry, for we aren't going much further. As for the identity of our destination, it is a ship in space, a little less than a half-million miles from Saturn. I have hesitated to tell you this before,

as that ship is vitally, tremendously important. The fate of a world hangs on it. Secrecy was necessary, since certain very dangerous groups have become interested in my activities, and it was to foil their investigations that I was forced to adopt mystery as—"

There was an abrupt intrusion. Feet pounded on the floor of the passageway outside. The voices of numerous men, raised in anger, swelled into volume. Travers tore open the door and leaped out into the passageway.

From the direction of the engine room, a knot of crewmen approached. At their head was Mike Hardesty, leader by right of iron muscles and rock-like fists. Hardesty was a giant, with a smashed nose and a scarred face.

"What's this?" Travers demanded.

Hardesty stopped, planting huge feet firmly on the floor. "Cap, Smitty here just came runnin' in with the news we ain't stopping at Saturn." He gestured at the man who had brought Travers the message from Rickard. "That right, Cap?"

"Right," Travers said. "So what, Mike?"

"So we ain't goin' any further," Hardesty growled. "You got to turn back, Cap. If you don't, we're takin' over the ship." Travers' voice cracked whip-like. "This is munity!"

"Aye—mutiny, then!" Hardesty's heavy jaws locked in sullen determination. The men behind him surged forward with ominous mutterings.

CHAPTER II

BEHIND him Travers heard a soft moan. He saw Ardis Rickard in the doorway of the cabin, her small face twisted in despair. Professor Rickard was supporting her with an

arm about her slender shoulders. His square-hewn features were grim.

"Mutiny, Captain?" Rickard asked quietly. At Travers' brief nod, the scientist stepped forward. He addressed the rebellious crewmen in a tone of solemn urgency.

"Men, we haven't much further to go, and we can't turn back now. We'll reach our destination soon. It is vitally important that nothing interferes with this flight. You may understand when I tell you that millions of lives depend on my cargo reaching its objective."

"That's a lot of rocket exhaust!" Hardesty grunted. "What lives are you talking about? Earth isn't in any danger."

Rickard gestured helplessly. "I can't explain. You wouldn't believe me if I did. This affair is of such tremendous importance that it just has to remain a secret for the present."

"That's all we've had all along," Hardesty snapped. "Secrets...mysteries! Well, I know one thing that's no secret—we're turning back."

"Now look here," Rickard continued desperately. "I've paid mighty well for this trip. If money is any inducement, I'll see to it that each of you receives a large bonus when my cargo is delivered."

"Money won't do us any good if we're dead." Hardesty made a sharp gesture of impatience. "What I said still holds—we're turning back!"

Ardis Rickard pushed her way forward, her lovely face tearfully pleading. "Please," she said. "Please...it is not much further. There is no danger, and the need is so great. How can I make you understand? So many lives depend on your help."

Travers peered at her in sudden wonder. Her speech was oddly soft and slurred, foreign-sounding. He had

never heard her speak in quite that way before. It was as though the stress of circumstances had brought out qualities in her which she had been trying to conceal.

But in another moment he felt a sharp thrust of anger that it should be necessary for the girl to humble herself before these rough men. He turned her gently back into the cabin, nodding at Rickard as he did so.

"Both of you stay in there. I'll handle this my way." He faced Hardesty squarely. "Mike, I take it you're the leader of this gang of yellowbellies."

"Aye," Hardesty answered slowly. He eyed the younger man with a respectful wariness.

"You seem to need a lot of help, Mike," Travers went on.

Hardesty looked puzzled. "I don't get you, Cap."

"What I mean, Mike, is that you seem to be the whole show. Yet you seem to need a lot of men to back you up."

"Why, hell, Cap, they ain't backin' me up at all."

"Then you are the whole show, aren't you, Mike?"

Hardesty's expression became trapped. "Hell, no, Cap. What I meant was—"

"You mean you were backing up the men?" Travers broke in.

Hardesty gave a quick nod. "Yeah, that's right."

"They'll follow your word, Mike?"

"Damn right they will!" Hardesty swelled his big muscles and scowled at several of the crewmen nearest him. They edged away.

"All right, then." Travers stripped off his jacket, tossing it to one side. "Suppose we make this a two-man affair, Mike? You backing up your party, and me backing up mine. If you knock hell out of me, we turn

back. If I knock hell out of you, we keep on going. That fair, Mike? Better than mutiny, isn't it?"

HARDESTY frowned. It was evident that he didn't like the way the situation had been turned. But his code seemed to demand that he accept the conditions into which Travers had maneuvered him. His thin-lipped grin a moment later, however, showed confidence that his bull-like strength would triumph over Travers' trim compactness.

Hardesty's small eyes glinted. "Sure, Cap, that's fair enough," he said. "I'll take you on." He pulled off his grimy tunic, revealing a mighty chest and arms. He tossed the tunic behind him and then fell into a crouch, huge fists doubled and ready.

Travers knew he was hardly a match for the giant he faced. A couple of solidly planted blows from those great fists would lay him cold. In a contest of strength and brute power, Hardesty had all the advantage. But Travers didn't intend that the battle should be a contest of strength. His sole hopes rested on superior cunning and skill.

Hardesty stalked forward, his great fists bobbing. Travers poised himself on his toes, light and agile as a cat his mind clear and keenly alert. Abruptly Hardesty rushed, his left flicking out. Travers swung his head aside, and in the next instant stepped in close, his fists moving with blurred rapidity. Hardesty didn't show any effect. He merely grinned, shook his head a few times, and came on.

Space, in the narrow confines of the passageway, was badly limited. The battle could only take a backward and forward movement. This put Travers at a serious disadvantage, for he knew his sole effectiveness

against Hardesty's brawn lay in constant dodging, weaving, and circling. The narrowness of the passageway made this impossible. Travers knew he couldn't forever keep retreating before Hardesty's attacks.

Hardesty seemed to sense this. The caution with which he had entered the fray now left him. His heavy swings became more confident. And then he leaped at Travers in a sudden attack, mighty fists pistonning. Hardesty evidently had determined to bring about a swift conclusion to the fight.

The abruptness of the action almost took Travers by surprise. Before he could dodge back out of range, he received a jolting blow to the cheek and another squarely in the chest that knocked the breath out of him. Pain made a pinwheel of light in his head. Gasping, he quickly danced backward in desperate retreat.

Hardesty's grin was now eager and brutal. Inexorably he followed after his intended victim, smashing in one crushing blow after another. Blood dappled Travers' face from spots where the skin had been split.

At last Travers could retreat no further. The passageway ended in a flight of steel stairs that led down to a lower deck of the ship. He was bruised and battered, numbed with pain. It took terrific effort for him to keep moving. Unless a break came his way soon, he knew he would lose.

Hardesty seemed to regard the stairs at his opportunity to bring the fight to a smashing finish. Suddenly he dove straight at Travers, who was at the very edge of the stairs.

Travers had noted the stairs. He also had seen in them an opportunity. His reaction to Hardesty's assault was lightning-quick. He bent over, his hands gripping the guide rail of the stairs.

Hardesty's onhurling form struck Travers', and, unbalanced, went over. With a gasp of dismay, Hardesty flew through the air, landing at the bottom of the stairs with a resounding thump.

The flight of steps was not a long one. Hardesty was dazed by his fall, but not injured. In another moment he rose to his feet and climbed back up to the top.

THE RESPITE, though short, had given Travers a vitally necessary breathing spell. Hardesty was back in the battle, but his former energy and cockiness were gone. His swings were clumsy, badly timed.

Travers now closed in, sending home swift, lethal punches. And then the chance for which he had been waiting came. Hardesty's guard finally faltered and broke. Travers smashed his left into the giant's middle, followed it with a jolting right to the face. Hardesty bent, straightened, went reeling back, shaken and dazed.

Grimly Travers followed. He sent another left to the other's middle, and then his right, shooting up from his thigh, crashed squarely into Hardesty's jaw. The giant's knees bent and he turned and pressed his palms against the wall in an effort to keep erect. His knees sagged. He slid down the wall and crumpled limply to the floor.

Travers turned slowly to the group of crewmen, breathing hard, his features bruised and splotched with blood. They had been excited spectators of the fight, but now they were silent and awed.

"We're going on," Travers said quietly. "Any more objections?"

None of the men spoke. After another moment Travers retrieved his jacket and began stiffly to put it on.

Several of the crewmen lifted Hardesty's unconscious form, and with the rest following, went quietly back down to the engine room.

Travers felt soft hands brush his away as he began buttoning the jacket. Startled, he found himself looking into the face of Ardis Rickard.

"Permit me," she said. Deftly her slim fingers maneuvered the buttons in place. Her flake-gold eyes were shining. "You were very brave," she said. "Never have I seen anything of the like. Many millions of people are now indebted to you for their safety. My own thanks could hardly be enough."

She had spoken in her strange, slurred speech. More than their content, the pronunciation of her words had interested Travers. He searched her lovely features for some hint of the incredible mystery which he felt sure was hidden behind them.

"Captain—let me shake your hand!" It was Rickard, his voice husky with emotion. He caught Travers' fingers in a tight grasp. "What Ardis just said goes for me, too. You may not have known it, but in winning that fight you helped save a world."

Travers frowned in bewilderment. "I'm afraid I don't understand. What world are you talking about? Is Earth in danger?"

Rickard shook his bald head slowly. "No, Captain, not Earth. I hesitate to explain, because the world—our world—is not yet ready for the knowledge. It would do more harm than good. But in return for the service you have just rendered Ardis and myself, I'll tell you this much. The world of which I spoke lies in a sun system in an inconceivably remote part of the Universe. It is a beautiful world, a fine world, one well worth saving."

Travers' thoughts kaleidoscoped in

sudden, amazed speculation. If that world were so terribly far away, how was it reached? What sort of ship could cross the immense interstellar distance? Travers almost had the overwhelming answer when an abrupt ringing of the alarm bell echoed throughout the ship.

An instant later Jupe Barlow came running frantically up the passageway. His leathery face was pale, strained with an intense anxiety.

"Skipper—we've just been stopped by Harl Callan! Harl Callan—the pirate!"

"Harl Callan!" Travers gasped. "The famous Prince of Plunders! What's he doing in this part of the System?"

"A pirate?" Rickard burst out. "My Lord—the cargo! Millions in radium!"

CHAPTER III

WITH RICKARD'S appalled cry ringing in his ears, Travers ran to the control room. His thoughts raced in chaotic confusion. Shocked by the knowledge that the ship had been waylaid by a pirate, the scientist had involuntarily revealed the nature of the mysterious cargo. It was radium—an unusually large amount of it.

Travers wondered what part the radium played in the whole incomprehensible business. Rickard and the girl had insisted it was tremendously important that their cargo reach its destination. This was a ship in space, a half-million miles past Saturn. The fate of an unknown world seemed to rest upon the radium reaching that ship—a world in an unthinkably remote part of the Universe. Was the radium to be used in powering the ship? Or was the ship merely to transport it to that world?

Travers decided this latter guess to be the most likely. If so, he could understand Rickard's intense desire for secrecy. For a ship capable of crossing the immense distance between sun systems could mean only one thing—interstellar travel! And as Rickard had said, the people of the Solar System weren't ready for that yet. Knowledge that such a ship existed—within comparatively easy reach—would cause incalculable harm. In the hands of unscrupulous powers, such a ship would be a terrible weapon. Not until the constant menace of war had been abolished would the System be ready for interstellar travel.

But another and much more immediate complication had presented itself. Harl Callan, the famous freebooter, had stopped the *Perihelion*. Callan would doubtlessly search the vessel. He would find the cargo of radium and appropriate it after the manner of his kind.

Travers remembered Ardis Rickard's desperate anxiety that the radium reach its goal. The destiny of a far-distant world depended on it. Travers had only an inkling of what it was all about. He knew that such guesses as he had made were quite likely far from the truth. But remembering Ardis Rickard's driving urgency, he knew he had somehow to prevent Callan from taking the radium.

He burst into the control room. The viewscreen showed the sleek, gleaming length of Callan's pirate vessel. It was paralleling the freighter's course, several hundred yards away in space. The snouts of positron cannon and the tubes of torpedo launchers were menacingly in evidence along the pirate's hull.

Even as Travers looked, a voice spoke sharply from the radio.

"Open your airlock and prepare for a boarding party. We warn you that we are ready to go into instant action. The slightest sign of resistance will be fatal."

The radio clicked off. Pilot Bob Selden turned to look at Travers.

"Anything we can do, Captain?"

"I guess not," Travers said slowly. "The *Perihelion* doesn't have the speed or the weapons to justify any tricks. We'll just have to do what they say—for the time being, at least. Hold to your course."

A moment later Jupe Barlow ran into the control room. Behind him came Rickard and the girl.

"Captain—what are we going to do?" Rickard questioned anxiously.

TRAVERS SHOOK his head, his features bleak. "There's nothing we can do in the way of active resistance. Callan's ship is heavily armed, and all we have here on the *Perihelion* are a few small hand guns. Pirates generally leave independent freighters alone, and so I've never been faced with the necessity of arming my ship."

"But we *must* do something!" Ardis Rickard cried. "If this Harl Callan takes the cargo, my world perishes utterly!"

"Your world?" Travers echoed wonderingly. "What do you—"

He broke off. A heavy metallic pounding had sounded throughout the ship.

"The pirates," Travers said grimly. "They're at the airlock. Come along, Jupe. As for you, Professor Rickard, I think it might be best if you and your daughter remained out of sight."

"No, Captain, I'm going with you," Rickard insisted, squaring his blocky shoulders. "I want to do what I can to help."

"And I, too," Ardis added.

Travers shrugged; there was no time to argue. At a run, he set out for the airlock.

Travers operated the opening switch of the airlock controls, and shortly a squad of Pirates came clanking into the *Perihelion*. There were eight of them. They wore heavy, military-type spacesuits, and each held a Maddox blast-gun at the ready.

While the others formed a protecting circle, the leader of the pirates unscrewed the fastenings of his suit. The great breast-plate swung open like a door, and Harl Callan climbed out, leaving the metal garment standing on the floor behind him like a hollow robot.

The famous Prince of Plunder was a slender man of medium height, with a keen, high-cheekboned face and intense blue eyes. He was garbed dapperly in a smart space uniform consisting of green synthetic wool tunic and shorts with high boots of brown plastolon.

Callan placed his hands on his lean hips and regarded the group of people before him with coolly speculative eyes. His mouth, thin and firm beneath a narrow mustache, was twisted in a faint, quizzical smile.

Callan's gaze rested a moment on Ardis Rickard. Something that might have been surprise passed briefly over his features. Then his eyes moved on. When they came to Travers, they narrowed abruptly. Callan's hawkish features became queerly tense.

Travers had been staring at the buccaneer from the instant the other emerged from the spacesuit. Now his brown eyes lighted in joyfully amazed recognition, and a swift grin removed the tension from his face. He burst out:

"Harley Cald—I!"

Callan quickly raised a silencing

hand. The pirate's answering grin was at once an acknowledgment and a warning.

"Sorry, old man," Callan drawled. "Harl Callan's the name. The Prince of Plunder, at your service."

"Shall we start searching the ship, Commander?" one of the pirates asked. He spoke through the opened face port of his suit.

Callan shook his dark red head quickly. "Not this time, Percy. Our little visit has turned out to be one of pleasure, not business."

Such as showed of Percy's face beyond the opened face port was heavy and scarred, a strong fighter's face that Mike Hardesty would immediately have respected. Now it broke into a friendly smile.

"Sure, Commander!" Percy responded.

"At ease, the rest of you!" Callan barked.

The frowning muzzles of the blast-guns were lowered. Face ports were opened. The features of the pirate squad were wondering and puzzled, but withal friendly.

Callan turned to Travers. "May I suggest that we retire to your cabin for a little discussion, Captain? Your passengers and crew, of course, are under no restrictions."

TRAVERS nodded quickly. "With pleasure, Captain." He gestured at those of his officers and crew who were present, standing about in attitudes of bewildered curiosity. "Return to your duties, men." To Rickard and the girl: "You may return to your cabins. There is nothing more to worry about."

Then Travers turned and led the way to his cabin. Inside, he whirled and grasped Callan's extended hand.

"Harley Caldwell! Of All people! And the famous Prince of Plunder,

too! I just can't believe it. What in the name of reason are you doing in this part of space?"

Callan grinned. "That's what I stopped your ship to find out from you, Glenn. To answer your question, though, I have a base on one of Saturn's moons, and was returning from a little...ah...business trip when I saw your ship go by. Decided to investigate just as a precaution. One can't be too careful in my profession, you know. My friends, the Interplanetary Rangers, are forever trying all sorts of tricks to get their hands on me."

"I can understand that!" Travers ran a hand through his hair, shaking his head. "Old Harley Caldwell—the Prince of Plunder! Why, we roomed together at the Astronautical Academy. We graduated together, got drunk together, dated the same girls.... The last I heard, you had vanished in space while commanding a passenger ship for Intersystem. And now you're still alive...as Harl Callan, the pirate. I don't get it!"

Callan smiled wryly. "It's a long story, Glenn. When I was given that captaincy by Intersystem, the line was heavily in the red. The directors were a bunch of rats; they decided to sabotage a couple of their ships so that they could collect insurance on the wrecks. I was the scapegoat the first time. I managed to save only a few of the passengers and crew, and Intersystem collected handsomely.

"The second time, however, only I and two others came out alive. That was when I woke up to what it was all about. I couldn't have returned to Earth with what I knew, though, since Intersystem was powerful enough to shift the entire blame on me. Remember, the disasters only happened to ships I was commanding. And even if I had managed to make

Intersystem pay for what it did, I'd have been involved in the resulting scandal—blacklisted by every line in the System. So I simply became Harl Callan, the Prince of Plunder. It's not a bad business, once you get used to it."

Travers caught the other's arm in quick sympathy. "You've had a rotten break, Harl. But now I understand the Prince of Plunder's mysterious grudge against Intersystem. You did right in driving those crooks on the rocks."

"Yes—I made them pay," Callan's features twisted bitterly. "But at the same time it forced me to remain a pirate. I didn't like it—but I had to make a living." He smiled with sudden pride. "But I've tried to be a good pirate—if there is such an animal. I've never taken an innocent life, never stolen from those who couldn't afford it."

TRAVERS' grip tightened on Callan's shoulder. "A damned good pirate, Harl. The Prince of Plunder is famous—and liked. I've heard the Interplanetary Rangers chase you around more out of duty than any actual desire to bring you in. They know you've operated on the side of the law as much as you've worked against it."

They spoke for a time, recalling memories of their days at the Academy. Without hesitating, Travers told Callan about Rickard and Ardis and their strange mission. Then Callan rose to his feet.

"Well, I'll have to be getting along, Glenn. If you should need me, give me a buzz on the space radio, and I'll come running."

They shook hands, then, in reluctant parting. With his men clanking after him, Callan left the *Perihelion*. Travers watched with a strange tight-

ness in his throat as the pirate's sleek ship blasted away into the void.

Travers met the questioning glances of the others with the explanation that he had once been acquainted with Harl Callan, before he became the famous Prince of Plunder. He did not go into details, but all were apparently satisfied.

Conditions aboard the freighter settled back down to a semblance of normal. There were occasional mutterings from the crew, but Mark Hardesty was a sportsman to the core and kept the men in control, living up to the terms of his lost fight with Travers. Then Bob Selden signalled Travers on the inter-ship communicator with the announcement that they were approaching a space ship off the port bow.

Travers watched the strange vessel swell into size and detail in the view-screen. An eerie wonder rose in him. Never before had he seen anything like that ship. It was of a totally unfamiliar design and construction. He knew instinctively that it had never been built within the Solar System.

CHAPTER IV

SELDEN turned in his chair to regard Travers with awed eyes. "Captain—that ship! What...what is it?"

"It's our destination," Travers answered slowly. "But just what it is, I'd rather not say just yet. Bring the *Perihelion* up beside it and cut off power."

Travers left the control room, then, and went to Rickard's cabin. "We've reached our destination," he reported. "What are your instructions from this point on?"

An immense relief leaped into Rickard's eyes. The lines grooving his face seemed to smooth away. "At

last!" he breathed. He gestured excitedly. "Excuse me a moment, Captain. I must tell Ardis."

Travers watched as Rickard hurried to the door of the girl's cabin.

"We've reached the ship!" he announced, when she appeared in answer to his knock.

Joy brightened her lovely face. With a soft cry, she threw herself into Rickard's arms.

"Jarnevon!" she murmured. "Jarnevon is saved!" She turned impulsively to Travers. "Captain, I don't know how to thank you. Without your help, this never would have been possible."

Travers shrugged in discomfiture, meeting her gold-flaked eyes in sudden wistfulness. For the first time realization hit him that this meant parting. He was reluctant to accept the fact that he would most likely never see the girl again. He knew that the memory of her strangely slurred speech would haunt him forever.

Travers looked away in abrupt embarrassment. He became aware of what was responsible for his feelings. He—Glenn Travers, tough young skipper of the *Perihelion*—was in love!

"There is no time to lose now," Rickard said swiftly. "We must get the cargo loaded aboard the other ship."

Travers nodded and started to move away. A sudden metallic pounding halted him. Someone was knocking for admission on the outer door of the airlock!

He turned puzzled eyes to Rickard. Oddly enough, the scientist smiled.

"That will be my partner, Professor Harry Jonothan," Rickard explained. "We left him aboard the other ship as a sort of guard. No doubt he's here to welcome us back. Will you please see that he is admitted aboard, Cap-

tain?"

Travers voiced brief agreement and started for the airlock, his thoughts whirling. Professor Jonothan's absence from the affair was now explained. He had been left aboard the mysterious ship in space, which had been the *Perihelion's* objective.

Once again Travers operated the airlock opening switch, and shortly a spacesuited figure clanked inside. The man who climbed from the suit was very tall, with a great shock of blond hair. His lean, hard body showed a whipcord strength. A blast-gun was holstered at his hip.

Rickard shook the arrival's hand with a broad grin. Then he turned to Travers.

"Captain, I want you to meet Professor Harry Jonothan."

Travers took Jonothan's extended hand with an acknowledging smile. Introductions over, Jonothan turned eagerly to Rickard.

"Did you get the stuff?"

RICKARD nodded and glanced at Travers. "Captain, will you see that the work of unloading the cargo is begun?"

Travers hesitated, his eyes narrowed in a frown. Then his lips pressed together determinedly.

"Professor Rickard, I'm afraid I must refuse to follow your instructions any further, until I know what this is all about. Please understand that I'm not doing this out of idle curiosity. I have the highest regard for the reputations of Professor Jonothan and yourself, but there are certain things involved in this matter which are rather suspicious, to say the least.

"I know for one that our cargo is an unusually large amount of radium—you yourself revealed that. I know for another that the ship we have

just reached is an interstellar vessel, built upon another world. Such bits of information as you have dropped from time to time, apparently have been made to lead me into believing that the radium and the ship are to be used to save some world in a distant part of the Universe. But for all I know, your motives may be much deeper than that. In the wrong hands, an interstellar ship would be a terrible weapon. Until I know the full truth of this business, I shall have to refuse any further co-operation."

"I understand your attitude," Professor Jonathan said slowly. "The ship out there *would* make a terrible weapon." Suddenly his hand darted to his hip. He pulled the blast-gun free, pointing it directly at Travers.

"You know entirely too much, Captain—too much for your own good, I'm afraid. The System is not yet ready for this knowledge. Not until it has outgrown its childish propensity for constant warfare will it be ready.... I assure you that the motives of Professor Rickard and myself are of the best, but if you refuse to believe, the only thing I can do is to force you to help us."

Rickard gestured wearily. "It isn't necessary to go into that, Harry. Captain Travers has already helped us more than we'll ever be able to thank him for. He is, I'm sure, entitled to a full explanation of what this is all about."

"Yes," Ardis added abruptly. "I would like very much for the Captain to know. He can be trusted. The knowledge would be safe with him."

Jonathan replaced his weapon in its holster. "Well, it's all right with me, if you both say so."

"Let's go to my cabin," Rickard suggested. "We'll need privacy for what's going to be said."

Tense with excitement, Travers followed the others. At long last, the mystery was going to be cleared up.

"To begin with," Rickard said, when they had been seated, "Ardis is not my daughter. In fact, she is not from Earth at all, but from a planet amazingly like Earth in size, physical properties, and chemical make-up. The name of this world is Jarnevon. Evolution on both worlds seemed to have followed parallel lines of development, producing a race of people similar to ourselves in every detail."

Rickard smiled at Travers' expression as he stared at Ardis. He went on, "Like Earth at present, Jarnevon has suffered from continual warfare. Then its women revolted against the almost constant carnage and destruction; they seized the reins of government, and Jarnevon became a matriarchy. War died out; for centuries there has been peace. The arts have flourished greatly, but science, particularly where it might have potentialities toward war, has largely died out.

"Now, a race of alien beings has become aware of Jarnevon's existence, and this through an expedition which discovered the planet. The aliens have proved themselves to be warlike and cruel; during their scouting of Jarnevon the expedition made a number of raids to obtain captives and loot. They caused a great deal of destruction in several major cities out of no other apparent motive than sheer devilry.

"Fortunately not all the old weapons had been destroyed by the matriarchs. These were put back into operation, and the expedition was finally driven away. But there is no doubt that the aliens will return with reinforcements, obviously regarding Jarnevon as easy prey when sufficient

force is brought against it."

RICKARD leaned forward in heightened earnestness. "At present the matriarchs of Jarnevon are making desperate efforts to prepare for an attack when the aliens return in force. Using the old weapons as models, they are building more. But a serious drawback to these preparations is that the weapons, without exception, are powered by radium, and in the centuries of peace most of the available radium has been used up in other ways. So unless Jarnevon receives a supply of radium to power its weapons, it will fall when the invaders return. That may be very soon."

Travers nodded slowly. "But how does Ardis and the interstellar ship enter into it?"

"The only way for the matriarchs to obtain radium was to visit some other sun system," Rickard continued. "Among the old weapons was a number of interstellar vessels. These were put back into operation, and crews of specially-trained girls were sent out in the hope of finding a planet from which a supply of radium could be obtained. Ardis was the leader of one such crew. She happened to stumble across our sun system by the merest chance."

"I get it now," Travers said. "You and Professor Jonothan ran across Ardis' ship while on your scientific expedition."

Rickard nodded. "And by means of the electronic educators possessed by her people she made us understand the purpose of her visit. The devices, you see, impress knowledge directly upon the memory centers of the brain. In this way we were able to make a quick exchange of language and information. The rest was comparatively simple."

"Professor Jonothan and I swiftly discovered that there would be no financial obstacles toward obtaining the amount of radium Ardis required, and this because of the fact that her vessel was constructed mainly of vulcanium." Rickard smiled briefly in response to Travers' expression of incredulous surprise. "Yes, vulcanium—the element we regard as more precious than platinum or gold. As you know, most of the other elements at present can be produced by the atomic transmutation process, radium among them. However, because of its tremendously complex atomic structure, the manufacture of vulcanium is virtually impossible. Hence its standing as a precious element."

"To obtain radium, all Professor Jonothan and I had to do was to tear out a sufficient number of partitions from Ardis' ship. Ardis and I then took this to Earth in the expedition vessel, exchanging the vulcanium partitions for credits, and the latter for radium. To avoid suspicion, since we had decided it was best to keep the interstellar ship a secret, I had Ardis pose as my daughter. Fortunately, I had commercial contacts who were able to keep the entire transaction largely under cover, but even so a hint of the affair may have reached certain dangerous parties."

Travers shook his head in awe. "Great space—an interstellar ship... built mostly of precious vulcanium! Why, we're political dynamite!"

Jonothan nodded grimly. "All too correct, Captain. Which is the reason why we can't waste any time. Your freighter may have been followed. Jarnevon needs that radium, and only Ardis' interstellar ship can get it there. If that ship falls into the wrong hands, Jarnevon is doomed. And as for the System...well, you can imagine what would happen is some un-

scrupulous political power gained possession of the ship."

Travers rose quickly to his feet. "We must get busy, then. I'll see that the work of unloading the radium cargo is begun immediately."

Hurrying to the control room, Travers went to the inter-ship communicator and sent out swift orders. The *Perihelion* awoke into bustling activity. When Travers joined the two scientists and the girl again, they were donning spacesuits preparatory to overseeing the work of loading the radium into the interstellar ship.

"Come along, if you wish, Captain," Rickard invited. "You can have the opportunity of seeing what a vessel from another world looks like. Ardis will show you around."

Travers hesitated, then nodded. He knew this would be his last sight of the girl.

Ardis smiled in evident shyness. "I shall be very glad to show you my ship, Captain."

Travers grinned back and began climbing into a spacesuit. He froze into motionlessness as Third Mate Bill Paxton came running into the airlock foyer.

Paxton's face was bleak. "Cap—I've been keeping an eye on Dorg Sandas, like you said," he blurted. "And do you know what? He's a spy, that's what he is! I just caught him using a hidden space radio down in the hold!"

CHAPTER V

TRAVERS went cold with dismay. Dorg Sandas—a spy! What did it mean? With whom had the little Martian been communicating?

In the next instant Travers whirled to Rickard and Jonothan. "This means trouble—serious trouble. We can't

waste a single second now. There's no telling what will happen. You've got to get the radium loaded aboard the other ship as fast as you possibly can. And take Ardis with you. I'm going to see what this is all about."

The two scientists nodded briefly and completed the sealing of their suits. Then, with Ardis between them, they clanked into the airlock and shortly were out in the void, crossing to the interstellar ship by means of a guide line which Jonothan had previously strung.

Travers turned grimly back to Paxton. "Sandas—where is he?"

"I locked him up in one of the store rooms down in the hold," the other explained.

"Come on, then," Travers snapped. "We're going to have a little talk with him!"

Travers opened the store room door to find Sandas seated comfortably on a tool chest. The little Martian glanced up as they entered. He seemed totally unconcerned.

"Get up!" Travers said.

Sandas rose slowly to his feet. Some of his nonchalance left him. Fear crept into his eyes as he gazed at Travers' face.

"Who did you call on the space radio, Sandas?" Travers demanded.

"You'll find out soon enough."

"Answer me, Sandas! Who was it?"

The other shook his head. "I ain't talking, see? Like I said, you'll find out."

Travers made a hard, sharp movement. The back of his hand sliced the air and cracked whip-like against Sandas' face. The Martian fell back in surprise, then sprawled against the tool chest as he collided with it. Travers followed the man, caught him by his tunic, jerked him erect, and swung him joltingly against the wall, Sandas dangled in Travers' grasp, the

toes of his space boots barely touching the floor.

"You're going to tell me what I want to know," Travers said with deadly softness. "Or else I'm going to knock the information out of you. I haven't any time to waste, Sandas."

"All right," the Martian answered sullenly. "I called Karn Norgan, that's who!"

"Karn Norgan!" Travers gasped.

Sandas' wizened features glowed fanatically. "Right—Karn Norgan, leader of Marsland. Only now he's going to be leader of all Mars... maybe of the whole System!"

"Where is he located, Sandas? How soon can he get here?"

"Karn Norgan was following our course all the time, since we left Mars. I kept sending him the co-ordinates. So I suppose he's close enough to get here in a couple of hours or less. That means you better watch your step with me, Travers. You won't have time to get away in this old tub."

Travers hurled the Martian away and turned to Paxton. "Great space—this is bad! If Norgan gets his hands on that ship, the whole System will be turned inside out!" He gestured imperatively. "Keep Sandas in here, Bill, I've got to tell the others about this."

Racing back to the airlock foyer, Travers climbed into the spacesuit which he had vacated a short time before. A moment later he was crossing toward the interstellar ship. He found Rickard and Jonothan supervising the loading of the radium. Ardis stood nearby.

"I found out who it was Dorg Sandas called," Travers told the two scientists. "It was Karn Norgan, dictator of Marsland on Mars."

"Norgan!" Rickard exclaimed in dismay. "Why, that man's utterly ruthless—power-mad! He'll stop at

nothing! We must work even faster now. The radium must be loaded before he arrives."

"And that will be mighty soon," Travers said. "Norgan followed us all the way out here."

He glanced at Ardis. She stood like a statue of frozen loveliness. He tried desperately to think of something reassuring to say, and then an idea occurred to him.

"The situation isn't as completely hopeless as it looks," he told the girl. "Here is what you can do. Have your ship prepared for flight at an instant's notice. Then take off for Jarnevon the moment Norgan appears. Understand?"

SHE NODDED quickly. Then, as though arresting herself on the very brink of motion, she hesitated. Her gold-flaked eyes met Travers' solemnly.

"This...this is farewell, Captain," she murmured. "I had hoped—" Abruptly her voice faded. She looked away.

On an impulse Travers touched her arm. "I had some hopes of my own, Ardis. But it seems they are not to be. Farewell."

She lifted her eyes again and looked at him for a long tense interval. Then she turned abruptly and strode away. Travers watched her go with an aching sensation of loss.

He turned back to Rickard and Jonothan. "Well, I'm going to return to the *Perihelion* and help unload the radium. I presume you both are going to Jarnevon."

Rickard nodded. "We wouldn't miss the chance for all the credits, degrees, and medals in the System!"

Travers shook hands with the two scientists. Then, closing the face port of his suit, he let himself out once more into the void.

The crew of the *Perihelion* was strung out between the freighter and the interstellar ship. As those within the freighter shoved the lead containers of radium through the cargo hatch, the others quickly shunted them across to the other vessel, where they were taken aboard.

Travers pitched in. The number of lead containers seemed endless. As he was handed one by the man behind him, he passed it quickly to another in front. His motions gradually took on a mechanical precision. Back of them, back of his very thoughts, lay a burning urgency.

Occasionally he glanced in the direction of Saturn. The ringed planet loomed large in the void, somehow a baleful presence. No glittering specks of brightness showed as yet to indicate the approach of Norgan's ships.

The lead containers began coming more slowly. Travers used the radio within his suit to call Jupe Barlow aboard the freighter.

"How many left, Jupe?"

"We're hauling out the last ones now, skipper!"

Eagerly Travers resumed work. And then, glancing toward Saturn again, he saw a pair of shining motes against the planet's disk. Two ships, approaching at top speed. Norgan's ships, Travers knew.

But the unloading of the containers had been finished. Even now the last of them was being stowed aboard the interstellar ship.

"Board ship, men!" Travers called into his radio. "And fast! Possible enemy vessels approaching."

He followed the others into the *Perihelion*, and at the control room viewscreen he watched as the two ships swelled into size. Soon he could make out the insignia painted on their hulls, Karn Norgan's party symbol, a triangle.

Travers smiled grimly. Karn Norgan was due for an unpleasant surprise. Ardis had obviously witnessed his approach from some sort of viewing apparatus aboard her own vessel. Even now her slim hands must be moving over the controls of the interstellar craft. Within seconds it would vanish with the incredible speed that only an interstellar ship possessed. Karn Norgan would find his trap suddenly empty, his prey having flown right out from under his nose.

But as the two warships rushed closer, nothing happened. Ardis' vessel remained motionless. Travers' felt a cold surge of dismay. What was wrong? Why didn't Ardis take off?

The two warships separated, one taking up a position beside Travers' ship and the other beside that of Ardis. Soldiers in spacesuits began pouring from the airlocks.

TRAVERS witnessed this through his face port as he crossed the void toward the interstellar ship. Certain that something had happened to delay the vessel, he had hurriedly donned a suit and gone to question Rickard and Jonothan.

The two scientists came running to meet him as he emerged from the airlock. Behind them followed Ardis.

Travers jerked open the face port of his suit. "What's wrong?" he demanded. "Why didn't you take off? Norgan's here—has us surrounded already!"

"The controls jammed!" Rickard said heavily. "Ardis has her technicians working on them—but they can't possibly be cleared in time. Can't we—"

A heavy metallic pounding rose from the direction of the outer airlock door, chopping off Rickard's words. He glanced at Jonothan in

despair.

Within his suit Travers sagged. "No time," he muttered. "Norgan's here now. He'd blast us if we tried anything."

Preceded by a squad of soldiers, Karn Norgan clanked triumphantly aboard. The ruler of Marsland wore an ornate spacesuit, with a triangle symbol emblazoned on the breast.

With the soldiers grouped watchfully around him, Karn Norgan climbed from his spacesuit. He was a squat, powerful man, with a shock of black hair and a short beard. His sharp black eyes were set deeply in pits of gristle. He had a large beaked nose with flared nostrils and thin sardonic lips.

He was garbed spectacularly in a black jacket and white breeches thrust into shining black plastolen boots. The front of the jacket was encrusted with a glittering array of medals and ribbons.

Placing his knuckles on his hips in a characteristic pose, Norgan studied the group of captives before him, contempt and arrogance evident in his gaze.

"Where's Dorg Sandas?" he demanded abruptly.

"He's aboard the other ship," Travers said. "You'll find your precious little spy locked up in a store room down in the hold."

Norgan turned to one of the soldiers behind him. "See that Sandas is released and taken aboard one of the warships." He swung back to Travers. "As for you, it would be wise to use a great deal more respect when you speak to me."

Travers' eyes glinted. He said incisively, "I'm a citizen of Earth, Karn Norgan, not one of your followers to order around."

"The power of Earth doesn't extend out here," Norgan returned. "I'm

in full control, and you all will do just as I say if you have any regard for your health."

The dictator returned his attention to Ardis. Now he walked close to her, devouring her loveliness with narrowed eyes.

"Well, well! Not only an interstellar ship, but a beautiful young woman besides. An exquisitely beautiful young woman, I might add." He smiled thinly. "My dear, I think you and I are going to be friends...very good friends."

After a moment Norgan glanced at Travers and the two scientists. His grin faded. His beady stare probed at each of them in turn.

"As for you...well, there's an old saying—dead men tell no tales!"

CHAPTER VI

NORGAN BARKED swift orders. Two of the soldiers were left to guard Travers, Rickard and Jonathan. The others were to accompany Norgan and Ardis on an inspection tour of the interplanetary vessel.

Norgan held Ardis' arm in wolfish familiarity as he led the group away. She shrank from him in dislike, but was unable to escape the hard, possessive grip of his fingers. Travers watched with helpless fury until a turn in the corridor hid the couple from sight.

Each standing watch in turn, the two soldiers who had been left with Travers and the scientists climbed from their space-suits. Travers had not yet removed his own suit, and now one of the guards gestured at him.

"Crawl out of your shell, spacie," he commanded. "You ain't going anywhere for a while—if you live long enough to go anywhere."

Silently Travers unfastened the

breast plate of his suit from his position within. A dim thought stirred in his mind—and then it blazed into sudden prominence. With it came a plan. A plan which, if it worked at all, would strip Karn Norgan of his control over the situation. The risks would be huge—but Travers knew he could not avoid them.

He swung open the breast plate and climbed out. He pretended clumsiness as he did so, swinging the suit around on the floor until it stood sideways relative to the two soldiers. His hands were thus concealed and they worked swiftly, flipping the activator switches of the propulsion rockets built into the shoulders.

The rockets ignited, flamed and as they flamed, Travers swung the suit around the rest of the way, so that the back of it was turned toward the two guards. He himself was hidden behind the suit's bulk.

The Martians swore in dismayed surprise and triggered their weapons. Travers' suit deflected the charges, and then the shoulder rockets caught the soldiers in their blowtorch-like blast. Their curses died abruptly in choked screams. Faces blackened, uniforms charred, they slumped to the floor.

Travers whirled to Rickard and Jonathan. "Quick! Get into suits. We're returning to the *Perihelion*. It's our only chance to spoil Norgan's little scheme."

Rickard paused only long enough to grip Travers' arm. "Fast thinking, son! You deserve a medal for this!" Then he turned and began climbing into one of the spacesuits vacated by Norgan's soldiers. Jonathan, nearby was getting into another.

Travers turned to Norgan's own

suit. It was this, he hoped, which would insure the success of his plan.

Seconds later the three were crossing to the *Perihelion*.

More soldiers were on guard within the freighter. Several lounged inside the airlock foyer, while others kept watch over the crewmen in the engine and control rooms.

As Travers, with Rickard and Jonathan following, emerged from the inner airlock door, the soldiers in the foyer stiffened into surprised attention. Seeing the ornate space-suit, with the triangle symbol on the breast, they evidently assumed that Norgan himself was inside. It undoubtedly never occurred to them that anyone else would be wearing the suit.

Travers kept his face averted behind the face port. He waved the soldiers back, and with Rickard and Jonathan close behind him, clanked hurriedly to the control room.

More soldiers were on guard there. They had Bob Selden, Jupe Barlow and Bill Paxton gathered into a tight-lipped group against one of the walls.

WAVING his hands in an imperious gesture of dismissal, Travers got the guards out of the room. They were puzzled, but did not hesitate to obey the order. With the door closed and locked, Travers and the scientists climbed from their garments. Jupe Barlow and the others stared incredulously, then leaped forward with excited questions. Travers left Rickard and Jonathan to answer them, while he hurried over the space radio. He switched on the powerful apparatus sending out a call on the general communications beam. Except for personal

communications, all ships in space had their receivers tuned to that beam.

"Harl Callan!" he called. "Glenn Travers calling Harl Callan!"

Anxiously Travers waited. He repeated the call. Then, after what seemed centuries, an answer came.

"Harl Callan in contact! What is it, Glenn?"

Travers spoke a code name for a frequency he and Callan had used as cadets at the Academy. He made the necessary adjustments on the apparatus, then waited until Callan's buzzed signal indicated that the other had tuned in.

"What is it, Glenn?" Callan repeated. "Anything wrong?"

"Plenty!" Travers said. He explained swiftly. "We need your help, Harl," he finished. "If Norgan gets away with what he's up to, the System is in for a bad shake-up."

"I'll be there!" Callan promised. "Might be something I can do. In fact, I'm sure of it!"

"How far away are you?" Travers asked.

The other laughed. "Not far away at all, Glenn. You see, I happened to pass Norgan's ships on their way out, and I followed them to see what they were up to. Seemed funny that they should be so close on your course."

"Great!" Travers cried. "Hurry, Harl!"

Pulses leaping with renewed hope, Travers switched off the radio. As he turned, Rickard hurried up to him, grasped his arm and pointed. Gazing in the indicated direction, Travers became aware for the first time that an assault was being made on the control room door. The area around the lock was glowing a fiery red as blast-guns played upon it.

Even as Travers watched, the lock gave. The door crashed open, and a

close-packed group of Norgan's soldiers burst into the room. The muzzles of their weapons fastened threateningly on Travers and the others.

A moment later Norgan himself came stalking inside, his square face twisted in fury. He came to a stop before Travers, breathing hard.

"You!" he snarled. "You're going to pay for what you did!" Abruptly his black eyes narrowed. "Who were you calling on the radio?"

Travers smiled, as though in triumph. "The Interplanetary Rangers," he said. "You won't get away with this, Norgan!"

"The Interplanetary Rangers?" Norgan threw back his head and laughed. "You poor fool, don't you realize it'll be weeks before they get here? By that time, you'll all be dead and I'll be millions of miles away. With the interstellar ship in my possession, no one in the System will be able to touch me!"

Norgan's exultation faded. Knuckles on hips, he studied Travers with sudden deadly purpose.

"I should have had you killed at once," he said slowly. "I almost made a serious mistake in letting you live as long as I did. But that little matter is going to be corrected here and now."

The dictator stepped back. Drawing his blast-gun, he signalled to the soldiers behind him. They lifted their weapons, selecting victims from among Rickard, Jonathan and the others.

Travers felt a sharp dismay. He couldn't believe that his death was only a matter of another few heart beats. He had counted on Norgan being occupied with other affairs until Callan arrived. But Norgan intended to take no further risks with Travers and his group. He was going to have them killed immediately.

STALLING FOR further time was out of the question. The fingers of Norgan and his soldiers were already tightening on the triggers of their weapons. Travers braced himself for the bolts of energy which would leap out at him within instants.

The buzzer of the space radio sounded. It cut into the strained silence like an explosion. Instinctively the eyes of Norgan and his men went to the apparatus. Their deadly intentions were momentarily forgotten.

The buzzer sounded again, with strident insistence. Gesturing for his men to remain on the alert, Norgan went over to the radio and switched it on.

"Who is it?" he snapped.

"This is Harl Callan," the suave tones of the Prince of Plunder answered. "As for what I want, I might ask the same thing of you, Karn Norgan."

"That's my business!"

"I'm here on business, too," Callan growled. "And I'll have no interference from a dictator. I know you have two ships to my one, but I can give you a battle, as you well know. One hell of a stiff battle!"

"Wait!" Norgan said quickly. "There is no need to go into that. Look, Callan, I have in my hands the means to spread my authority over the entire System. I could use the help of a man like you. What do you say to joining my forces? As a reward to start with, how would you like several millions in radium?"

Callan's voice sounded again from the space radio. "Did you say several millions in radium, Norgan?"

"Correct!" the dictator said. "If you agree to join me, I'll see that it's placed in your possession at once. What do you say?"

"Several millions in radium—as a starter, eh?" Callan said slowly, his tone musing. "I say... yes!"

CHAPTER VII

"GOOD!" Norgan finished. "I'm aboard the freighter. Come over immediately, and we'll discuss arrangements."

"I'll be right there!" Callan said.

Travers stared blindly at the floor, a sickness spreading through him. Knowledge of Callan's duplicity had come as a terrible shock.

The Prince of Plunder had been his last hope. But Callan had sold out for the radium. The fact that he and Travers had once been close friends apparently mattered not at all. Callan had revealed himself to be as callous and mercenary as all the rest of his kind.

A sense of defeat, of utter hopelessness, pressed like a weight on Travers' mind. Everything was lost now. Without the radium, Jarnevon would fall to the invading aliens. And with Ardis' interstellar craft in his possession, the military power of the System would be helpless before Norgan's ruthless scheme of conquest. As for Ardis herself, Travers refused to think of what would happen to her in Norgan's hands.

Switching off the space radio, Norgan turned. He gestured imperatively at the nearest of his soldiers.

"Quick! Send word to the ships. When Callan appears in space, they are to turn their guns on him and blast him out of existence! His men will surrender quickly enough after that. I don't trust that pirate—he's a little too clever to take chances with."

The man designated lifted his hand in a salute and hurried from the control room. Norgan whirled to the

viewscreen, operating the controls to bring Callan's ship into focus and watching intently.

A long moment passed. Then the airlock of the pirate vessel opened. A figure in a spacesuit emerged. Shoulder rockets flaming, it began to move toward the freighter.

The eyes of everyone present were fixed upon the viewscreen. The incredible was going to happen. In another moment Harl Callan, the famous Prince of Plunder whose cunning had carried him safely through the most frantic attempts at capture, was going to be sent to his doom.

Travers glanced around swiftly. All were occupied with the drama about to reach its grim climax. It was an opportunity, if he could take advantage of it quickly and effectively.

He saw that he was near the control console. A plan surging into his mind, he began to inch toward it. What he had seen in the viewscreen had shown him that the freighter was lying almost parallel to one of Norgan's warships. If he could reach the controls, he could send out a blast from the side jets that would swing the *Perihelion* directly into the warship with battering-ram effect. In the confusion he and his men would have a chance to turn on their captors.

A sudden ripple of motion seemed to spread through the room. Everyone seemed momentarily to strain closer to the viewscreen. In spite of the desperate purpose in his mind, Travers looked, too.

Callan was now directly out in space; midway between his private vessel and the freighter. And then the guns of the warships flamed. A dozen annihilating beams converged on Cal-

lan's spacesuited figure, made it a focal point of eye-searing light. For a terrible moment the beams played. Then they winked out. Where Callan had been there now was nothing at all.

Norgan straightened up, chuckling in satisfaction. And as though the sound were a signal, Travers leaped into action. He crossed the remaining distance to the control console, his fingers flashing to the activator switches of the side jets.

A bellow of abrupt sound filled the control room. An instant later the *Perihelion* moved joltingly, smashing into the warship alongside it.

TRAVERS HAD been prepared for what had happened. Gripping the pilot chair for support, he was the only one in the control room not thrown to the floor. Now he moved into action again, switching on the inter-ship communicator.

"Travers speaking!" he shouted. "On your feet, men! This is your chance. Fight for your lives!"

The stirring call of a bugle couldn't have been more effective. The freighter woke into tumultuous activity. Its crew had been confronted with death or possible enslavement. Presented now with an chance for life and freedom, the tough space men threw themselves like yelling demons upon Norgan's disorganized soldiers.

Travers ran to the tangle of bodies on the control room floor, where Norgan and his men had been thrown. Seizing one of the soldiers by the front of his uniform, Travers hauled him to his feet, sent him reeling back with a blow to the jaw. A stray rifle presented itself. He snatched it up and swung furiously about him with the butt.

Rickard and Jonothan had stiffly

regained their feet. At sight of the battle which had started, all trace of stiffness left them. Eyes lighting eagerly, they pitched in. They were scientists, specialists in deep space radiations. But they showed now that they were specialists in another field as well—that of rough and tumble, give and take fighting.

Jupe Barlow and the other two officers were already in action, fighting as a tiny compact team. Jupe released blood-chilling yells as he flailed about him with hard, leathery fists.

Brilliant flashes of light showed in the viewscreen, indicating that a terrific battle was going on out in space as well. Travers decided that Callan's pirate crew had not surrendered, even though deprived of their leader, and was fighting it out with Norgan's remaining warship. The other seemed to have been put out of operation by the crushing impact of the *Perihelion*.

Norgan was screaming frantically for his soldiers to open fire. But none did. In the confined space of the control room, a shot was as likely to hit allies as well as enemies.

But the soldiers had been trained well. The first shock of the crash and the confusion of the battle had now left them. Their long conditioning to fighting tactics now came into play. Slowly but surely they began to gather themselves into a compact group near the control room door. Once in a group, friend could be differentiated from foe. Then weapons could be brought into action.

Traver's hopes sank leadenly as he saw what was taking place. The soldiers were already aiming their weapons, waiting for their last few comrades to join them before they unleashed destruction upon Travers and his group.

The end was only seconds away. Travers had made his last gamble—and failed.

And then Norgan and his men were hurled forward like tenpins as the control room door abruptly burst inward. With a grinning Mike Hardesty at their head, a shouting band of crewmen burst into the room.

"Need any help, Cap?" Hardesty roared. He didn't wait for an answer. Growling, he threw himself at the soldiers nearest him. The others boiled around him, a tangle of pistoning arms and kicking legs.

With a shout, Travers plunged into the fray. It had been a stiff fight to begin with, but the melee that took place now paled it into insignificance.

"Burn us down like rats, would you?" Hardesty was bellowing. "Well, I'll show you!"

"Give 'em hell, skipper!" Jupe Barlow's voice, shrill with excitement.

TRAVERS GRINNED briefly. then became lost again in the blaze of battle. He never knew exactly how it happened, but suddenly he found himself facing Karn Norgan. The dictator had somehow managed to keep a grip on his blast-gun. He had been dancing about on the fringes of the fight, waiting for just this chance. More than anything else, he wanted to put an end to this upstart young captain who had brought such utter ruin to his plans.

Now Norgan levelled the weapon at Travers. "I said you'd pay!" he shrilled in fury. "Now die!"

Travers reacted desperately. Even before the last words left Norgan's lips, he threw himself at the other's legs.

They went down in a wildly threshing tangle. Travers got a grip

on the hand that held the blast-gun. Frenziedly Norgan sought to pull free and bring the weapon into play. Travers rammed a knee into the man's stomach, then shot a fist into Norgan's face. The dictator sagged, shaken and dazed.

Jerking the blast-gun away, Travers hurled it to the floor behind him. Then he pulled Norgan to his feet. He held the other erect, steadied him. His fist flashed out from his shoulder, thudding solidly into Norgan's jaw. The other's head snapped back. With glazing eyes, he went reeling into the fray behind him, to be knocked down and trampled underfoot by the furiously milling-fighters.

Within moments the battle was over. Travers' men began fighting themselves before they realized it. They looked around puzzledly. Then, becoming aware of their complete victory, a ragged cheer burst from their throats.

And on the echoes of that cheer came a soft clear voice.

"Captain! Captain Travers!"

It was Ardis. Tears of joy sparkling in her glorious eyes, she flew into Travers' arms. He stood in stiff bewilderment a moment. Her arms were locked tightly about his neck and her soft body was pressed close to his. Realization swept him that her gladness was not so much that the fight had been won as that he himself was safe. His own arms tightened around her, and he pressed his cheek against the fragrant tumble of her hair.

The shambles of the control room faded into unreality for him. Music filled his veins where blood had coursed.

There was the abrupt buzzing of the space radio. Travers drew away from the girl, his face suddenly tense. Had Norgan's remaining warship dis-

posed of Callan's pirate vessel? Would Norgan's soldiers aboard it once more take the situation into their own hands? He switched on the radio in dread.

"Attention, freighter *Perihelion*!" a voice said harshly. "Our guns are trained upon you, and we will open fire at the slightest sign of resistance. Put down any weapons and surrender immediately!"

A short time later the metallic clanking of spacesuited men sounded through the freighter. Travers glanced hopelessly at Ardis. Their reunion was to have a bitter ending. With his men to back him once more, Norgan's revenge would be merciless and swift.

"Glenn!" a familiar voice cried. "Thank the powers— you're safe!"

Travers' eyes widened in amazed disbelief. Harl Callan, the Prince of Plunder, stood in the control room doorway.

"But... but you're dead! Travers gasped. "You were blasted out in space. I saw it!"

CALLAN STRODE forward, grinning broadly. "Glenn, I'm disappointed in you. Did you really think old Harl Callan was fool enough to be taken by Norgan's little trick?"

Travers shook his head in bewilderment. "I don't understand. I thought you had double-crossed me, accepted Norgan's offer. Then I saw you killed. What... how—?"

"I merely pretended to accept— just to see what kind of a trap Norgan was planning," Callan explained.

"I wasn't in the spacesuit at all. It was just a robot decoy that I keep on hand for emergencies like that."

Abruptly Callan looked indignant. "Hell, Glenn, you didn't think I'd throw you over just for a few millions in radium, did you?"

Travers caught the other's arm quickly. "I'm sorry, Harl. But the way it looked, I didn't know what else to think."

Callan gestured generously. "I'll consider the matter closed, then."

"What about Norgan's warships?" Travers asked. "What happened to them?"

"Junk." An impish grin spread over Callan's face. "Norgan's men are just like Norgan himself—lots of thunder, but mighty little blood. I was actually disappointed in the fight they put up. Your freighter did for one of the ships, I for the other. They'll both be able to limp home after some patching up, but I'd say their fighting days are over.... Well, what do you suggest doing with Karn Norgan?"

"Let him go, I guess," Travers said. "Back on Mars he'll rave and rabble-rouse as usual, but without a weapon like Ardis' ship, he'll be harmless enough."

"Poor little dictator!" Callan murmured. "He'll probably spend the rest of his life thinking of the glory that might have been his."

Travers felt a light touch on his arm. He looked down into the gold-flaked eyes of the girl beside him. Ardis was smiling tremulously.

"Captain, I have been thinking. I must go to Jarnevon, yes. My mission has yet to be fulfilled. But later.... later, would you mind very much if I returned?"

"There isn't going to be any later," Travers said. "I'm going with you, of course. I just made up my mind about that. You won't be able to get rid of me."

"Just try to get away!" Ardis flashed.

"We'll be glad to have you with us, Captain." Rickard stepped forward. Beside him was Professor Jonothan. The two gazed defiantly at Travers, as though daring him to suggest that they were being left out.

Suddenly Mike Hardesty was elbowing his way into the group. He stood sheepishly before Travers.

"Cap, me and the boys don't know much of what this is all about, but we know you're going to help some people that need help mighty bad. Well, I been talkin' to the boys, an' ... an', well, we want to go along. We don't know where we're goin', but if you're goin, that's enough for us."

"Say, hold on a moment!" Callan yelped. "You aren't going to leave me out of this after all I did! I'm going, too. Ardis' people will need fighters like me and my men."

The girl looked up at Travers, smiling mistily, the happiness in her face saying what she seemed unable to say. His arm tightened around her.

"We'll start making preparations, then," he said. "But right now... well, two's a company and a couple of dozen others are quite a crowd!"

THE END

HOW OLD IS BRONZE?

YOU CAN walk into any department store today and find a great many household items made of bronze. We all accept it as commonplace, and we have all seen at one time or another, someone busily engaged in polishing a bronze plaque.

But the startling fact that we never think of is that bronze is, and was, one of

the first metals man ever put to use!

As nearly as we can determine, bronze first was used by man around 2000 B. C. Its use spread swiftly through Europe and Asia and parts of Africa. Thus, the next time you see a bronze lamp, just consider that you're looking at a metal that was first used some 4000 years ago!

Carter T. Wainright

THE SCIENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY

IN OUR everyday life few of us realize that we are being products of applied psychology. Basically, this means that in one way or another our talents, whatever they may be, are being directed toward their full utilization in our particular situations.

The whole thing started, to coin a phrase, with the work of Charles Darwin, who in his study of organic life looked for variations from one individual to another, and from species to species, stressing the importance of each variation.

Following up Darwin's initial investigations, that proved to psychologists that one individual usually differed in one way or another from the next, Simon and Binet experimented with a series of tests to help determine the mental stature of children.

These tests were the forerunners of our present day intelligence quotient tests, commonly known as IQ's. In the last war, for example, the Army was quick to realize that a smooth running military machine, utilizing all the abilities and capabilities at its disposal, could only be maintained by a thorough usage of applied psychology. Thus it was that as each man was taken into the service, whether he was a draftee or a voluntary enlistment, he was put through an extensive series of tests—the IQ's—which included everything from mechanical aptitude down to knowledge of English grammar. After a man had completed these tests, and the results were made known to the Officers in charge, the Army knew more about the capabilities of the soldier than the soldier did himself.

The next step involved a meeting with a counsellor who closely questioned the soldier to find out his personal likes, dislikes, and aspirations. Coupling these facts with what had already been learned through the medium of the written tests, the Army was thus able, in most part, to direct the full talents of the individual to the type of work he was best suited for in military service.

Of course, there were many men who felt that the Army's use of applied psychology was drastically misplaced, inasmuch as they eventually ended up in the Infantry instead of as a radio technician or a motor mechanic. The facts are, of course, that the primary concern was in building a smooth fighting machine, the necessary ingredients of which were not only technicians, but mainly, fighting men. But even though a man ultimately found himself a member of the infantry arm of the service, much to his chagrin at the time, the Army still didn't forget him. For once he was sent to a fighting unit for training, the Officers in charge, having his file at hand, were in a position to direct the soldier's talents toward mechanics in the motor pool, radio work in the Intelligence, Reconnaissance, and Communications sections, or

even to the kitchens where preparations of food for large numbers of men required skilled efforts.

But not only in military life is applied psychology considered an integral part of everyday routine. It has been gaining more and more prominence in the field of industry every year. It has been found that a careful study of a worker will eventually help in fitting him to the point where he will be able to produce a maximum amount of work with the least amount of expended energy.

This has been notably achieved in what we may term "mass psychology" in large industrial plants. It was found that by supplying a mixed program of music throughout the working day, the workers were more at ease, their labors progressed faster with no appreciable expenditure of extra energy, and that the entire morale was boosted sometimes a hundred percent.

In addition to music, large, well-fitted lunch rooms were adopted, and recreation centers for the use of all employees. These products of applied psychology helped to remove one prime objection on the part of the worker—the objection of working for the sake of work. Today, most employees in large, efficiently run organizations, no longer feel that they are merely reporting to duty for an eight hour stretch. They have other interests that tie in with their work. Competitive sports, relaxation periods in comfortable surroundings, meals in well-appointed cafeterias, and musical therapy to soothe them mentally even as they carry on their duties.

But the application of psychology does not stop here. It enters our personal lives as well. When a member of society breaks away from the normal pattern and commits a crime, he is not merely looked upon as a criminal deserving only bars as a punishment. For with the use of psychology, each offender is minutely examined, with an effort put forth to determine just why he turned away from a normal existence to commit a crime. It is a tribute to our modern society that for this reason a great number of people are not put behind bars for long periods because of single infractions against man's laws. For if the courts determine that an offender is not wholly to blame for his actions, because of some extenuating circumstance in his past or present life, a system of probation is introduced to try and help the individual back along the course of a normal existence.

So it can be easily seen just how important a part applied psychology plays in our life today. We may not always recognize it as such, but it is there, helping to make us utilize our talents to the utmost. And making the world a better place to live in at the same time.

Charles Randolph Mecklenburg

THE ANCIENT GEOMETRICAL MONUMENT

Article 1 — Its General Form

By ROCKY STONE

This is the first of a series of articles which will bring to the public an understanding of amazing discoveries which are of priceless practical value today, and which were also keyed in an ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule which is thousands of years old.

MANY PEOPLE are unaware of the fact that there has been a happening which out-rivals the "Arabian Nights" in actual life, and which will come to be known as the most amazing story of this generation. It has been said that truth is stranger than fiction, and the true facts, genuine scientific facts, which are verifiable and can be employed for the benefit of anyone who desires to understand and use them, are to be presented in these series of articles.

After you understand these genuine scientific facts and the practical wisdom of these mental giants of long ago, it will be amusing to realize that our modern civilization has not yet attained the high standards of the planners of this ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule.

Discoveries of great value, both in the science of man and the physical sciences, have already been achieved and attained in actual life experience and experiments, but like other discoveries of the past, like the airplane and radio, these have been refused competent investigation, and have thus been held back from people.

How many of you know that Louis Daguerre, the discoverer of photo-

graphy, was actually imprisoned in an insane asylum without receiving any opportunity for a hearing where he could defend himself, simply because of the ignorance of the people of his time? Do you know that 'practical' men thought that Mr. Stephenson should be imprisoned in an insane asylum, simply because he had made the statement that people would soon be able to travel at the speed of thirty miles an hour? Did you ever stop to consider what Edison had to bear from the ignorance of the uninformed? Even Columbus was unable to sail to the West except with a crew made up from prisoners, who were promised their freedom, providing they sailed with him on his initial voyage.

When people do not understand anything that may be brought to their attention, they tend to denounce the person responsible for its discovery or invention. Einstein was protected, simply because some well-known men stated that only a few men could understand his theory of relativity, and so most people did not even bother or at least try to read his findings. Anyone can perceive that uninformed persons, unless receiving an O.K. from persons in authority, quite often tend to go through the *mental exer-*

cise of jumping to conclusions, and thus they make prejudgment from their own bias and prejudice without realizing that they are guilty of entertaining the grandiose idea of being able rightly to judge without having an understanding of all the facts.

From what has been discovered in the case of the Great Pyramid, it is now realized that there were persons who lived among the inhabitants on this earth, our planet, some thousands of years ago and who were at that early time far ahead of outstanding and intelligent men and women down through the centuries to today.

Those mental giants of long ago were apparently highly civilized and cultured, while they seem or appear to have had such a high Intelligence Quotient and Character Quotient that it is next to impossible to believe that such highly developed persons were living among the human race over more than two score centuries ago. In fact, from what has been uncovered, it appears that these wise men of long ago would be called supermen, if they were living today—and there are very few persons in the world today who could even partially compete with those mental giants.

The most amazing fact is that those mental giants were apparently able to look into the future to our present time when great changes are coming about in world civilization. They apparently realized in their time that the human race was mentally evolving and that it would take several centuries for a people to arise who would be able to comprehend what they had so ingeniously keyed in their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule.

The question now arises, ~~through~~ *the readers of Amazing Stories*, how fast these genuine scientific facts and

ancient wisdom can be grasped, so that they will not only be understood, but that they may also be used for the benefit of the human race. You, the readers, of *Amazing Stories*, have the opportunity of becoming pioneers in relation to this ancient science and wisdom, which has been rated as being five hundred (500) years ahead of this time. The greatest care is to be exercised so that these genuine scientific facts and wisdom can be made clear to the average person.

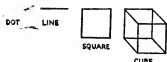
During President Harry S. Truman's Inaugural Address, a statement was made which was somewhat prophetic, "It may be our lot to experience, and in large measure to bring about, a major turning point in the long history of the human race. The first half of this century had been marked by unprecedented and brutal attacks on the rights of man, and by the two most frightful wars in history. The supreme need of our time is for men to learn to live together in peace and harmony."

In this first article, the general form of this ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule will be examined, and although geometry may not have any appeal for some of you, it nevertheless might be wise to understand and follow through what is disclosed.

The speculative philosophers from Plato to Spinoza and Emerson realized that nature geometrizes. Geometry is a natural language and is therefore a normal language, especially since anything which is really normal is also natural.

Mathematics when written out becomes geometry, and mathematics is the only language in which scientific facts can be keyed. Those mental giants of long ago apparently realized the inadequacy of any language excepting mathematics, and so these

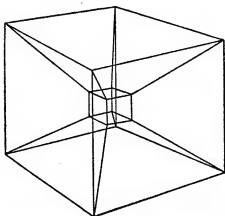
FIGURE A



wise men keyed their ancient genuine wisdom and science in a geometrical monument, so that as mental evolution progressed among nations through citizens, they apparently realized that the time would come when what was keyed in their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule would be comprehended and employed. There is the most amazing story of the human race now here, because the ancient science or wisdom has been comprehended and verified, and you are receiving a knowledge of this genuine and ancient science and wisdom through this series of articles in *Amazing Stories*.

Those mental giants of long ago have remained ahead seemingly of mathematicians down the centuries and to the present time. Today's scientists have been, in some cases, striving to uncover a "tesseract", which objective appears to be already

FIGURE B



CUBE GENERATED INTO LARGER CUBE VIA SIX TRUNCATED PYRAMIDS

encompassed in the ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule which was erected when apparently the majority of living people were barbaric in action, behavior, and conduct.

Those mental giants of long ago apparently realized that until the laws or methods of action of nature in relation to man were understood and obeyed nature would appear utterly ruthless to man. In their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule, they keyed their correct knowledge concerning the laws of nature in relation to man, and their success and apparent prescience in so doing this will naturally bring the apparent pseudo-science of man to an exact genuine science during our time.

The clever way in which these wise men of long ago picked the general form of their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule, is frankly one for the books. Fully understanding what is keyed in this ancient monument which will be given in this series of articles, anyone will be able to appreciate their apparently vast mental power. However, the purpose of this first article is one to show the general form of this ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule.

Perhaps you have heard how mathematicians have generated a cube mathematically, so let us review how it is done, so that we can better appreciate the cleverness of those mental giants.

When a dot is generated, there arises a succession of dots or a line. When a line is generated, there arises a square. When a square is generated, there arises a cube, as shown in Figure A.

In Figure B, when a cube is generated, it grows into a larger cube, and from each of the six faces of the

smaller cube to each of the six corresponding faces of the larger cube you can see a truncated pyramid. Thus each small square of the smaller cube is generated to each larger square of the larger cube via a truncated pyramid. Six truncated pyramids are formed in the generation of any cube.

Those mental giants of long ago picked or chose a truncated pyramid as the form of their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule. There were many reasons for doing this which will come out and be shown in this series of articles.

As perhaps you have already been aware, the mental giants of long ago picked or chose a general form for their geometrical monument or time-capsule, which has been known for centuries as the first great wonder of the world and its purpose has been hidden until our generation.

There was much more than just the general form of a truncated pyramid to this ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule from long ago.

Perhaps you can perceive that just as the larger cube in Figure B was generated from the smaller cube via six truncated pyramids, just so the smaller cube was generated from a still smaller cube via six truncated pyramids. Thus the lines of the six truncated pyramids never come to a single point, but instead of just a tiny cube.

Those mental giants of long ago naturally selected a truncated pyramid whose cornerstone was a missing capstone—a perfect cube which cannot be seen by the physical sense of sight.

The four sides of the ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule faced the South, the East, the North, and the West respectively. On the

FIGURE C

South side of truncated pyramid. Cross lines, as SW-SE, in proportion as follows: 1, $1\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{16}$, etc.

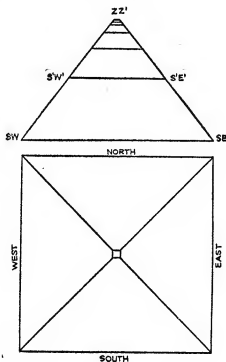


FIGURE D

South side of this ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule, you can see how and why the lines SW-Z and SE-Z' never come together. Those mental giants of long ago used the base-line SW-SE for a certain keying. The line above was S'W'-S'E' which was exactly 1-2 SW-SE. The line above S'W'-S'E' was 1-2 S'W'-S'E'. Thus, each line was one-half (1-2) the preceding line, and for an example by counting SW-SE as one (1), we have 1, 1-2, 1-4, 1-8, 1-16, 1-32, 1-64, 1-128, 1-256, 1-512, etc., etc., and zero (0) is approached, but never attained. And so SW-Z and SE-Z' never come together. (Figure C)

You can see the two lines SW-Z

and SE-Z' do not come together at the top of the South side, and neither do similar lines on the East North, and West sides converge. Then looking at the truncated pyramid from above, as in Figure D, you can see that there is a small square formed which can become smaller, never equalling zero.

The small square of this truncated pyramid together with the five small squares of the other truncated pyramids, like in Figure B, form a small cube which becomes smaller, but never equals zero, and is never eliminated, as per ancient plan.

Those mental giants of long ago planned the general form of their ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule, so that there would always be a "missing cornerstone", and many persons have speculated about this for centuries. Mohammedans bow and worship five times a day toward Mecca, where there is a perfect cube, called the Kaaba. The "Holy of Holies" of the descendants of Abraham was a perfect cube which was placed in the West side of King Solomon's Temple upon the truncated top

of Mt. Moriah. These and other symbols of this ancient geometrical monument or time-capsule have been used and employed by governments and world religions for centuries.

There is a time-capsule symbol on the reverse side of the U.S. Great Seal, which you can see by looking at the back of a U.S. one dollar bill.

The genuine scientific facts in future articles in *Amazing Stories* will touch upon jurisprudence, psychiatry, psychology in presenting the ancient and genuine scientific basis for the science of man and all the sciences.

Investigators of the past who have measured the corridors of this ancient time-capsule have calculated the end of the Old Order to be worldwide in 1952-53, while the practical beginning of the New Order from August 20, 1953 until the end of the present century.

In any case, intelligent men and women of any nation cannot sanely refuse actual and genuine scientific facts which are priceless today—and forever.

(Article Number 2 Next Month)

THE END

ALL FOOLS' DAY



By A. Warren



ON APRIL the first every year you are liable to receive a prankish phone call, or find yourself the butt of some general humor—usually at your red-faced expense. But have you ever wondered just where it all started?

The exact origin of April-Fool's, or All-Fools' day is still veiled somewhat in mystery, although it is generally considered to have been a relic of certain universal festivities which were held during the period (vernal equinox) beginning on old New Year's Day, March 25, and finally ending on April 1st. Thus the last day was set aside as a time for pranks. The day when jokesters ruled supreme.

Throughout the world this custom has lasted in one form or another through the years. In India, the date set aside is March 31st, the feast of Huli. Here the chief practice is to send an individual on a completely senseless mission or errand under the pretext of urgency. In other countries the custom is followed in like manner or with variations, the only real difference being in the name allotted to the day itself. Great Britain follows generally the same custom as we do, namely, April-Fools' day. However, in Scotland it is known as "Hunting the Gowk", the gowk being a cuckoo. The one thing in common in all countries, however, is that all of us seem to be gullible!



The CLUB HOUSE

Where science fiction fan clubs get together.
Conducted by **ROG PHILLIPS**

I PROMISED this month to discuss what seems to be the future of science fiction and its fandom, as compared with the past waves of emerging thought, such as science itself, which gathered into a wave with the cohesive power of the experimental method, and invention, which followed it.

In order to understand and evaluate properly the field of science fiction it must be compared with these past waves. It must be properly placed with respect to them.

Before science and the experimental method we had what is usually considered as being philosophy. There were, of course, a good many philosophies. What they were is not as important to us here as what attitude they had. It was the attitude of the creator of each philosophy that shaped it.

In all the early philosophies we have one very outstanding attitude that very unmistakably shaped them. That attitude may best be outlined by the following line of reasoning;

The human mind finds that some things seem reasonable, while other things seem absurd. This distinguishing between the things of common sense and the things of absurdity seems to be a property of the human mind. The universe itself must be a thing of common sense. Therefore it is possible to discover its basic workings by laws of thought, for in the last analysis the development of common sense will coincide exactly with the behavior of the cosmos.

This attitude in the ideal sense, meant that a perfect mind shut up in a cave and divorced from all experience would, if it existed long enough, arrive at a correct picture of the nature of the cosmos without benefit of experience or experiment, merely by examining what was reasonable and what wasn't, building on such things alone.

This idea was very popular. It produced results, too. The only trouble was that it produced almost as many different results as there were philosophers. It produced schools of thought, each backed by its own brand of common sense, and each arguing hotly that it alone was right.

Perhaps the basic idea of a perfect mind arriving at the true nature of reality without benefit of experience or experiment is correct; but unfortunately none of the great philosophers had perfect minds to start with, and if they did they didn't live long enough, or else they rested on their conclusions and stopped thinking too soon.

At any rate, eventually the idea of studying the nature of things by looking up at the ceiling and twiddling one's thumbs began to wane in popularity.

The thing that really started this decline and fall of the (mentally) roamin' empire of thought was the fact that whenever some screwball did a little experimenting he discovered something that pure thought in a paneled studyroom hadn't suspected could exist.

It wasn't the things which are common everyday experience that spelled the temporary death of abstract reasoning, but the things going on just outside the range of ordinary experience, such as spark gaps, hertzian waves, chemical combination, and so on. It only took a few of these things to create such confusion that the abstract school couldn't cope with them.

The idea to form that regardless of explanations, certain things happened in definite ways that could be measured. And gradually the thumb twiddlers were forced to think about the theoretical interpretation of data rather than of the basic nature of reality without regard to what reality consisted of.

Still, the idea of exploring by thought alone was too enticing and too intriguing to abandon. Modern theory which shows that common sense has little or no relation to reality cannot kill it. In every generation are people who firmly believe that abstract thought can penetrate all the mysteries of the universe.

The idea of the basic nature of the universe being sensible and understandable still persists. Science changed it only to the extent of adding the idea that experiment can GUIDE thought along the right paths to that ultimate goal.

That idea gives science its romantic appeal. Without it science would be nothing but pure technology. Basically, real science is nothing but pure technology anyway. Data and mathematical equations relating data are the only permanent part of science. Theory is constantly changing, and very little of it even today has any hopes of remaining as a permanent part of science without change.

It is this romantic appeal, this impudent belief that thinking alone can solve things, and that data serves only as a guide, that provides the energy and life of science fiction.

Gradually science fiction is going to attain a respectable status. It is going to take the place that the old thumb twiddlers with their philosophies aspired to. It is going to do that because it is a necessary adjunct to science itself.

Eventually there will almost certainly be books that classify the development of ideas in science fiction. These will be written by serious students rather than fiction authors.

Someday soon, such a person will write a book on time and time travel. That author will trace the idea of time travel in all its phases, and outline its development as it has taken place in science fiction stories.

There will probably be a book on life forms as the adaptation of life to conditions on other planets is developed in science fiction.

Eventually there will be books about books about science fiction, and textbooks giving courses on "explorative science." There may even be a five foot shelf of science fiction reprinting all the worthwhile science fiction of the past, with a special encyclopedia that classifies and cross-classifies all the ideas of science fiction.

Maybe by the end of this century an author of science fiction will have to have a D. Stf. after his name to get a publisher to read his manuscript!

You don't think so? Already in stf fandom are serious scholars who are writing histories of fandom, and histories of ideas developed by science fiction; and there are schools of thought also developing in fandom—and it is from that this more serious and scholarly side of stf will develop.

That is what I predict for the future of stf—a phase of classification and consolidation. Besides that there will be the other phases much as they are unfolding now; stf comes to popularize the romance of science fiction from the cradle up; science fiction adventure stories, love stories, etc.

But the main service of science fiction will be in the field of exploration of possibilities—the a priori approach to all phases of science and cosmic exploration.

It is already doing service in that respect. It can do such service because it is fiction rather than serious scientific papers. An author of a story may think out the thesis of his story very carefully and believe it to be highly probable, but overlook something that gives a wrong picture. His reputation isn't ruined by the blunder—unless the story is bad. A reputable scientist who published a paper expounding a great theory arrived at by making three times five equal eight would forever after be laughed at.

Perhaps, a half a century from now, some disciple of the historian, Oswald Spengler, will trace the influence of science fiction on our civilization and be able to prove that it was a greater formative influence than anything else today in the shaping of the world of two thousand.

CINVENTION REPORT: Things are really going along swell with plans for the

Cincinnati Science Fiction Convention which will take place September 3-4-5, 1949. For those of you who came in lately—this will be the official convention for fandom for this year. Last year it was the Torcon, at Toronto, and those boys voted at the Torcon to hold the 1949 convention at Cincinnati this year. At the coming Convention it will be voted on where it will be held in 1950.

The Cincinnati Fantasy Group sent out a Christmas card with a group picture of its members. They're a fine looking bunch. In January they put out the Cincy Report. It discusses the plans and details as they are at that date, and also gives the plans and details as they are at that date, and also gives the list of the ones who have sent in their dollar to become members of the Convention.

Now just because you can't go to the Convention is no reason why you shouldn't send in a dollar and become a member. It costs money to put on such a convention, and fandom doesn't have a national headquarters and local chapters, with dues of fifty bucks a year to draw on. At the first of the year when this Cincy Report was made out there were a hundred who had sent in their dollar. There should be several times that money to ensure success.

There will also be an auction of art work to help pay expenses, with originals being donated for the auction by the several publishing companies putting out stf prozines. There will be a second auction, of items brought by fans. Twenty percent of the proceeds of this second auction will go to the Convention.

It looks like maybe there will be some Alley Oop originals at the auction, too. Vincent T. Hamlin read the form letter I reproduced in the CLUB HOUSE in the February issue. He wrote to me that "you will find Alley Oop's papa most happy to oblige." By the time this goes to press the Convention committee will have contacted him and no doubt received those Alley Oop originals.

That's the kind of co-operation it takes to put over a successful fan convention. And you can co-operate too. Even if you can't go to the convention at Cincinnati this September, you can still help support it by sending your dollar to the Convention Committee, 129 Maple Ave., Sharonville, Ohio.

OFF-TRAIL REVIEW: Vol. 1, no. 1; P. O. Box 211, Greenville, Texas. J. Munroe Sullivan. 25 cents, \$1.00-yr. This is a semi-pro fanzine whose main claim to fame so far is its having Lilith Lorraine as one of the contributing authors. Its illustrations are strictly fan rather than pro. Credit should go to the Wesley Company of Greenville for a good job of printing this zine.

On this title page it says, "OTR's sale in communist held areas prohibited by soviet law." It also says, "Tabus: atheism, gross obscenity, irrational anti-Americanism, and childish cynicism."

Fiction in this first issue is written by Edward W. Ludwig, Clem Graham, and Sidney E. Porcelain. Also J. Munroe Sullivan and Frank Gogol.

FANTASY COMMENTATOR: Winter, 48-49; 25 cents; A. Langley Seales, 7 E. 235th St., New York 66. Part 14 of "The Immortal Storm" carried the history of fandom through 1938, and a very interesting period that was. An instructive article entitled "Conflict for the Soul," by David H. Keller is the feature article. FC, as I have said before, is a serious, well worthwhile zine, published by a man who takes his fanning seriously, and who is doing a good job.

FANTASY TIMES: Dec. 15, 1948; 10 cents, James V. Taurasi, 101-02 Northern Blvd., Corona, N. Y., bi-monthly. The best newzine on the market. It reports that Dale Tarr has been re-elected prex of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. He is to be one of the hosts at the Convention. There are three hundred members of the NFFF now.

In "The World of Tomorrow Today" Ray Van Houten reports a "Fly-in" theatre in operation at the Monmouth County (N.J.) airport. That's all I'll lift from this zine. Subscribe to it to get all the latest news of fandom.

ASTEROID X: "Fandom's Unique Magazine"; Dec. '48; Jim Harmon, 427 E. 8th St., Mt. Carmel, Ill.; 10 cents. A small size zine put out by hektograph. Forty-six pages make this issue rather thick. "The Legions of the Unburied Dead" by Bob Farnham is a nice story. Other stories are by Hilary King, Richard Logan, and Jim Harmon. The zine makes very interesting reading, though my copy was somewhat hard to make out in spots due to the hektographing.

SPATIUM: January, 1949, no. 3, the journal of the central New York Science Fantasy Society. 10 cents. H. Cheney, 66 Bassett St., New Haven 11, Conn. Highlight of the issue is a very intelligent article on General Semantics by Dik Hollister, taking issue with Korzybski.

KOTAN: December, 1948, vol. 1, no. 2. Gordon Mack, Jr., Box 138, Lake Arthur, La.. Another hekto job, but an excellent one. Besides the usual stories and articles in a puzzle department, Joe Kennedy, Fried, Norm Storer, Rotsler, Ricky Slavin, and Jon Gordon grace the contents page.

SCIENCE FANTASY NEWS: no. 1, Jan. '49. A. Vincente Clark, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, England. This is the first issue of the official organ of the Science-Fantasy Society now formed in England. Especially wanted by this group is contact with fans overseas, and especially here in the United States.

I think it would be a good idea if a few of you readers get in touch with these



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fans in England. You are so used to picking up your magazines on the local stand that you may not realize that most of them can't be obtained in England, where most of the population is situated between the devil and the deep blue sea most of the time—literally and figuratively. James Taurasi of *Fantasy-Times* publishes a one sheet British edition of his zine which he distributes free to British fan. But there are things we can all do for our overseas friends, such as sending them old prozines and new ones, corresponding with them, etc..

So that you can know more about the history of fandom in Great Britain the following article in *SCIENCE FANTASY NEWS* is reproduced here:

INTRODUCING THE S. F. S.

Ken Slater

Fantasy has been known ever since man developed the imagination, but the modern type of science, weird, and fantasy fiction, dating from the novels of such authors as Vern, Wells, Machen, and Blackwood, only began to reach a very large public with the advent of "Weird Tales", (1923), and "Amazing Stories" (1926), in the fertile field of American pulp magazine publication.

As soon as these magazines appeared, so did a following of people who were sufficiently interested in the stories to write to the editors and point out errors in the logic, in science, in the illustrations, and not only to point out errors, but to make suggestions. These people were the original "fans" as known in modern parlance.

But the amazing part is that the editors took note of what these people had to say, either improved or explained, and we finally arrive at the present day position, where editors, authors and illustrators frequently correct readers! But that applies more in the States....our fan history in the U.K. is no such story of achievement. Instead, it is a record of failure....glorious failure maybe, but still failure.

The earliest fan organization in this country was the Science Fiction Association. Formed in 1937, it closed down at the outbreak of war, its guiding members being unable to carry on for various reasons. During its period of activity, meetings were held, mimeographed magazines were produced, and contact established between a number of fans who have since taken an active part in the various projects connected with fantasy fiction in this country.

Co-existent with the S. F. A. was the British Interplanetary Society, not a fan organization, but a scientific body derived from fans with technical learnings. Commencing with a membership of thirteen it has today a healthy following of well over 600, and public recognition. In that achievement the fan can take some vicarious pleasure at least. It was from the fans that the organization started.

During the war, two other societies sprang up, one of them originating at the Paint Research Station at Teddington. Commencing as a library of magazines and books donated by fan Frank Parker, as being a method of passing time for the N. F. S. members whilst they were standing by, from it sprang the virile "Cosmos Club". Much of the club's success was due I think, to the fact that it suffered oppression from "Higher Authority", at least while this oppression existed, the club existed. When its membership spread beyond the confines of the laboratory, and the oppression and the war ceased, the club also ceased. Its ghost remains in the form of the "Cosmos Library", which operates under the aegis of the group known as the London Circle."

The other war-time organization was the British Fantasy Society, somewhat different in form as its membership was drawn from all over the U.K. The B.F.S. again continued while its operative difficulties were greatest, and went into a decline when most of them were removed!! Again a "ghost" of the society remains in the form of the British Fantasy Library, which, with the Cosmos Library, fill a great need for those of the fans who know of their existence.

I shall not comment at length on the pre-war British professional magazines "Fantasy" and "Tales of Wonder", except to say that "T. O. W." might still be running if the war had been a few years shorter. Nor shall I say much of the post-war abortive efforts to publish professionally in this country. "Fantasy" reintroduced, folded after three issues, due to paper shortage and lack of understanding by its publishers.

"Outlands", a semi-professional effort, was a one issue affair. "New Worlds" was produced three times, and then due to publishing difficulties, vanished. But "N. W." will be back with us shortly. Much has already been written on this, and so I shall say no more.

Our "Fanzines", (a wide and varied field of amateur publications produced by the fans, some typed, some duplicated, are chiefly represented at present by "Fantasy Review", a semi-professional printed booklet, and "Operation Fantast" a duplicated affair. If you are interested enough in these, or in any of the other matter upon which I have so lightly touched, a few letters and a little investigation will get you all the information you could desire, maybe more!

Now at last I come to to-day and the Science Fantasy Society. This society, springing to life as it does with a membership of more than 50, has a higher opening strength than any of its predecessors. That is a good sign. It also commences when it is obvious that a larger number of people

are interested in science fiction and fantasy than ever before in this country. Witness the production of so many fantasy books by publishing houses, and the large sale of the British Reprint Editions of "Astounding Science Fiction" and "Unknown Worlds."

The S.F.S. combines the good points of both the Cosmos Club and the B.F.S. in that it has a central organization which can get together to discuss and do things, but has a nation-wide membership, scattered it is true, but at least each single member in a town is a prospective point of contact for new members.

The Society has come into existence because there appears to be a need for it, and it will continue to grow as more people become aware of it, and what it has to offer.

And what has it to offer?

A seven-point policy has been laid down by a committee, which states fully the objects of the S.F.S. I shall quote it here, and then enlarge upon the points.

(1) The furtherance of all s-f and fantasy matters, both in connection with fans and with the professional field.

(2) The speedy dissemination of news to all fans.

(3) The encouragement of all fanzine editors, artists, authors, etc.

(4) The promotion of international correspondence.

(5) The possible stabilizing of magazine prices.

(6) The fostering of local groups, of national fan functions and similar matters which will benefit, indirectly, the individual individuals concerned.

(7) More publicity for the entire field of s-f and fantasy, and its recognition as a separate form of literature.

To enlarge slightly upon these points, in order. The first is just a good old "general coverage" clause, which will serve as a heading for anything, anyone, any time, may think of, not covered by the other six points.

Point two is an important one. By "News" is meant all items of interest, both personal and professional, and will be covered by the official organ, "Science Fantasy News". It is hoped to publish this every six or eight weeks, depending on circumstances. The Societies area link-up will be used on matters of urgency.

Point three is also of importance. By "encouragement," we hope that in the future we will be able to offer practical assistance, financial and material, to fanzine publishers. This matter is still under consideration, and further information will be given in the near future.

To aid editors, artists and authors, etc. A manuscript bureau is being set up to which all miscellaneous mss., (i.e.; those not directly commissioned or written with reference to any particular fanzine) should be sent, and from which editors may request material.

In addition, all items will be carefully inspected, and if the author, artist, etc., de-

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sires, those that show promise will be placed before a committee who will advise with a view to making the material sellable in the professional field. A small agency to place such material may be arranged at a later date. Point four is obvious, but all members who desire international correspondents should place details on file, in order that contacts may be made.

In item five it is not possible for the Society to do more than to quote a list of magazine prices which they consider fair, and then request all fans to stick to these prices when buying and selling. It is pointed out that anyone paying more than the quoted prices will be doing so of his or her or her own free will, and the S.F.S. is not going to bind its members down with any rules about what they may or may not do. The Committee would welcome the views of the members on this subject.

Number six is largely a question to be dealt with as it occurs, but it is the Society's intention to arrange the next Convention at about Easter 1949 and to give all fans good warning. Proceeds of an auction, etc, will naturally go to the funds of the Society.

For local groups, the S.F. News will publish lists of names and addresses, and will try to put new fans, and newly discovered ones, in touch with others in their locality, and will naturally also help and advise those wishing to form a group in any way possible. But this is mainly a matter for these fans, and something which the S.F.S. cannot start as a whole....the initial desire must be present in the individuals concerned.

And seven! The most important, I think. This question of publicity for fantasy and fandom has received as much attention and discussion as any two other matters together. In this brief outline, I cannot do more than to say that the subject will be fully covered in a separate article.

That goes equally for a number of other items such as requesting publishers to print, and reprint, certain books, and many other matters.

I have said enough to give you a brief idea of the aims of the S.F.S....now, how it will operate.

In this period, which is still the initial stage, members of the committee are making contact with the Area Secretaries, who have been chosen by expressed willingness to help, and where possible, geographical location.

Each Area Secretary will act as a sort of Liaison Officer, a link between the individual fans and fan-groups in his area, and the Committee. Later, when duties and responsibilities have been allocated as far as possible, members should write to the addresses as published in 'Science Fantasy News'. At present, the situation is still one in which all points not answerable by the Area Secretary will be forwarded to the Committee, who will find the answer. Each area has been allocated a Committee member to whom the Area Secretary will write.

Postage expenses will be remitted to the

Area Secretaries, but members wanting a mailed reply from them or from any other branch of the S.F.S. must enclose a stamped and addressed envelope.

Financially, the S.F.S. appears to be fairly secure. The subscription has been fixed at 5- for the first year, ending 31st December 1949. Members have been credited with their initial fee of 2-6d, and the remainder will be asked for during the year, when the Society is on a firm basis and is functioning smoothly.

Funds will be held in a joint account by the treasurer, Owen D. Plumridge, and Secretary Frank Fears.

This brief resume, will I hope, serve as an introduction to the S.F.S. Please don't expect too much, too soon. The Committee are going to work hard, and those of the members who can will also be asked to work on the various projects. It will take at least six months to get many of these into workable shape, but as soon as they start taking concrete form, you will be told!

In conclusion, I would like to thank, on behalf of the Committee, all those who have offered advice and help, and to assure all members that the S.F.S. will continue to operate with as few 'rules and regulations' as possible, in the belief that a co-ordination of voluntary effort will be of benefit, and give greater pleasure, to all of us.

* * *

First of the entrants for the one hundred dollars in awards to be given by this department for fan activity during 1948 is from SCIENCE, FANTASY, AND SCIENCE FICTION, the fanzine published by Frank Dietz, Jr., which is now also the official organ of the FANTASY ARTISANS CLUB; 20 cents, quarterly, P.O. Box 696, Kings Park, L.I., N.Y..

The three entries are, (1) "Robot Brain", by Frank Dietz, Jr., in Vol. 1, no. 1, (2) "I Was At The Torcon", which was a report made up of five short reports, by Alex Osheroff, Lloyd Alpaugh, Sam Moskowitz, Joe Shaumburger, and Will Sykora, in vol. 1, no. 2, and (3) the back cover drawing, done by John Grossman in vol. 1, no. 3.

Frank Dietz also sends a copy of each of the three zines with his letter, which is a good idea. Even if you eds have previously sent the zine for review, as Frank had, it may be lost by now. Better get those entries in. These three submitted by Frank Dietz are hereby accepted as bonny fidey genuine entries, and if none others show up they will win the prizes.

* * *

S, F, & S. F.; while we're at it we might as well review the current issue of Frank Dietz's zine. It's the official organ of the FANTASY ARTISANS CLUB, and you can't find nicer illos in any prozine! It's printed by photo-offset. Those fan artisans are really getting off to a good start. Frank Dietz is their president, John Grossman vice president, Jerri Bullock editor and publications director, and William Kroll fan artist's service director.

This issue presents a short skit on Jerri

Bullock. Born in Oakland California in 1928—that makes her twenty, and, alas, young enough to be my daughter, since I just celebrated the tenth anniversary of my thirtieth birthday—she is working at the Alameda Naval Air Station and attending the College of Arts and Crafts at Oakland. Her ambition for the future is to become a commercial artist, with her work in prizes.

Besides the many excellent illustrations in S. F. & S. F. there are several well written articles and an exceptionally well written short mystery by Phil Sedley entitled "?? Riddle ??". Part 4 of "Problems of Space" deals with probable effects of lack of gravity on the human body. W. C. Butts discusses the book, "No Place to Hide", by Dr. Bradley, which deals with the Bikini experiment. Dr. David H. Keller discusses telepathy in an entertaining manner. And Walter R. Cole in an article entitled "A Great Astronomer" talks about D. Hale, that great astronomer who died in February, 1938.

MUTANT; bimonthly, 10 cents, 50 cent per yr.; George H. Young, 22180 Middlebelt Rd., Farmington, Mich.; official organ of the Michigan Science Fantasy Society. Vaughn Greene of San Francisco has a nice bit of fiction in this issue entitled "Sea Monster". (By the way—if you live in the Frisco area the Golden Gate Futurian Society, 2235 17th St. is the up and coming fan club there.)

"The Man Who Murdered Fandom" is another Morgan Botts story by Art Rapp. "Flux" by Rad Nelson, might very well have fitted into "Unthinkable". It has an unusually good punch ending.

"Bill Porter Enters Heaven" is a nice short story by M-Sgt Richard E. Avery 6913284, HQ & HQ Sqdn, Alaska Air Command, APO 942, c-o Postmaster, Seattle, Wash..

A couple of poems, editorial, letter column, and a couple pages of MSFS business complete the issue of the best balanced fanzine there is. The Michigan group now numbers thirty active members, with a treasury surplus of \$23.75. That means they're something like a hundred and fifty-seven billion, six hundred million, twenty-three dollars and seventy-five cents more solvent than the United States Government itself!

FANTASY-TIMES; Jan. 1, '49; 10 cents, 12—\$1.00; published twice a month; James V. Taurasi, 137-03 Thirty-second Ave., Flushing, New York. This is the fanzine that tries to make like the newspapers, and each issue amazes me, because I don't see how they can gather all the latest news fandom and the prozines almost before it happens—but they do. Of course, the reason they can get the news out so quick is the several very able guys that work with Jimmy, and the fact that Jimmy himself keeps in personal contact with pro editors and authors and such.

THE END

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THE ART OF EARLY MAN

By Lester Fletcher

UNTIL THE latter part of the nineteenth century the study of caves as a definite still existing site of ancient cave man housekeeping was held somewhat in a skeptical light.

But during the late part of the century in 1879 to be exact, the now famous Altamira cave was recognized as a prehistoric masterpiece.

In that year the marquis de Sautola took his daughter with him (five years of age) on an exploration trip to unearth some bones and stone implements which the marquis felt were to be found there at the cave. And while he was busy with his own explorations, the little girl wandered into the cave, a candle in her hand providing illumination.

The marquis was suddenly aroused by her shouts of "Toros!" And wondering at that moment how a bull could have found its way into the dim recesses of the cave, he hurried to the little girl's side. He saw that she was pointing to the roof of the cave, which, while it was over her head, was so low that he had to stoop to reach her side.


He saw with some astonishment that his daughter was pointing to a distinct figure of a bison, carved on the rock ceiling. He examined the figure closely, and in his mind there was no doubt but that he was gazing upon the handiwork of a primitive craftsman, an artist who had lived countless centuries before.

When the marquis made public his findings, there was much debate on the authenticity of the bulls. But little by little, upon close scrutiny of experts, it was resolved that the handiwork was indeed prehistoric.

And how did the primitive man produce such lasting works of art through the ages? With only the barest of flint tools. And for purposes of coloring he used mineral oxides: iron giving a number of shades of red, and manganese a blue-black. Burnt bones were utilized for a definite shade of black, and various carbonates of iron for tinges of yellow and orange.

These raw colors were in turn pounded and mixed with fats, and they were put into bone paint tubes, the forerunners of our modern paint receptacles. As to the actual application of the paints on the hewn art, little is actually known. The caves were dark for the most part, the light of day rarely reaching far enough in to allow sufficient illumination. It can only be conjectured that primitive man had portable stone lamps to aid him in his

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work, lamps which used as their fuel, fat, and moss for a wick. Certain evidences have been found of human skulls being utilized for such purposes. And if this is so, then it is a commentary on the resourcefulness of early man—utilizing everything for the sake of art! But be that as it may, the evidence we have of early man's artistic endeavors is something to astound the cultured mind of the twentieth century. For we wonder if our modern art will withstand the ravages of time and the elements, so that sometime, in a still distant age, we will have a living record of our own greatness.

Certainly primitive man has proved his abilities in this respect—and with tools that would drive a modern artist to the point of apoplexy...

THE EVERLASTING PILL

By
Robert Claire

NUMBER 51 on the atomic scale is a bluish-white, exceedingly brittle metal, called Antimony. This strange element has been used as a medicinal agent throughout the world for a great many years. Centuries, as a matter of fact. In the old days it was utilized as an emetic agent, one of the more popular treatments being the making of a metallic goblet of antimony, and letting a portion of wine stand in the goblet for some time before drinking it. In action, the patient was likely to get more than he bargained for.

In the sixteenth century medical science was somewhat ignorant of all of the symptoms that antimony produced in the human body. Very often a patient would complain of heart trouble after taking the "medicine." And this was often the case, because it is a potent cardiac depressant, causing the beat of the heart to be less forceful, and infrequent.

In those days a neat trick was devised in the usage of antimony. The metal was administered in the form of pills, which would pass through the system and be reclaimed afterwards for further use. This led to the nicknaming of "The Everlasting Pill." And in truth it was such. But as to whether one could consider it the height of medicinal sanitation is another question—and we certainly know the answer to that!

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medicinal properties of antimony, facts which were not known during the sixteenth century when antimony was outlawed by the Parliament of Paris. For example, it is known today that in various forms, antimony acts as a relief and curing agent in the treatment of various tropical diseases.

The main thing we've discovered in recent years about such things is that no one medicine is "everlasting" and that use in moderation of any pill is more effective. That is probably the biggest reason in the world why a doctor's prescription is a thing to cherish—you get one filled, use it, and then return for medical attention before a new prescription is issued. People didn't follow this practice in the sixteenth century, but then of course, they weren't as smart as we are now! (We all say modestly!)

LITMUS SOURCE

By B. Ruthkirch

WE ARE all more or less familiar with blue litmus paper, used in determining the presence of acids, when the paper, turns red.

But just where and how did this paper come into being? Strangely enough, it started with a small plant known as a lichen.

The most valuable kinds of lichens are gathered from Cape Verde Islands, Lima, Peru, and the Malabar coast of India. The first step in the production of litmus is to separate the principles which yield the dye from the lichen tissues. These are subsequently ground up into a thick paste with water. A strong solution of ammonia is added then, and the entire mixture is agitated in an iron cylinder at a temperature of 140 degrees fahrenheit. This process requires several days.

Finally, potassium or sodium carbonate is added, and the resultant is the blue dye we know as litmus, which is impregnated on paper and then used as a determinant for acids and alkalis. In the above process, if the final step is not used, wherein the potassium is added, another dye is produced, which is used chiefly for coloring yarns. This dye, known as archil, gives an even, regular, heavy shade of color, popularly known as French purple, that has greater depth and body than any of the coal tar dyes.

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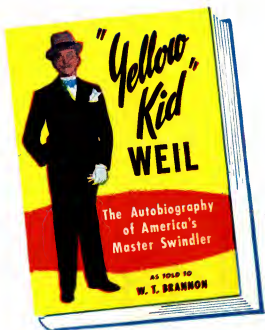
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